RUSSIA TODAY

By

Nityanarayan Banerjee

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To

My beloved father

Rai

Nirmalshib Banerjee

Bahadur

FOREWORD

The last World-War brought in its train several problems so complicated and colossal as to baffle our intellect and resourcefulness even after 20 years; and probably the most baffling of those problems is presented by the United Socialist Soviet Republics. The Russian revolution of 1917 was followed in quick succession by revolutions in Austria, Germany, Italy and in many other countries recasting and reshaping the politico-economic life of the entire continent of Europe. But none of the regional revolutions could gain even a fraction of the attention of the world-public that was drawn violently to itself by Soviet Russia. Fascist Italy under Mussolini no doubt came as the second best but could never stand comparison with the Russia of Lenin and Stalin from the point of view of worldwide publicity. Friends and foes alike of Russia agreed on one point, *viz.*, that the Russian revolution was undoubtedly the most outstanding phenomenon of this epoch. Soviet methods and ideologies came to be circulated throughout the world as much by those who detested as by those who ardently championed them. Like the biblical " forbidden fruit," this forbidden country came to be a sort of obsession with millions of people in different countries and climes. And when in 1927 the Soviet Government published a decennial survey in the form of the Soviet *Year Book*,

sober people, no doubt a small minority, came to be shocked for the second time by the revelation that the USSR. meant not only *revolution* but a good deal of *evolution* as well. In the liquidation of illiteracy, in the equalisation of social status, in the amelioration of the condition of women, in radical reorganisation in the technique of production and distribution, the USSR. had already made a record within the short span of ten years, forcing the world opinion to veer from negative detestation to positive demands as to the *why* and *how* of things in Soviet Russia. Naturally the first Five-Year Plan came to be a stunt in world politics and, summarised in a book form, became one of the best sellers of our epoch. So much so that a first year student of an Indian University of these days considers it beneath his dignity not to know something of Soviet Russia before attending the first lectures of the Colleges.

But, alas, it was difficult for Indians to know anything about Russia which was reliable and of abiding interest. A few Indian scholars got the faint report that even amidst the violent socio-economic upheavals, the Russians were inviting distinguished scholars from different parts of the world to celebrate the jubilee of the Russian Academy with Prof. Serge d' Oldenberg as its permanent secretary. The world of Indologists was surprised by the superb publication on the

Nirvana by Prof. Tscherbatsky, who is supervising Buddhistic Studies in Russia. The World of Indian scientists was greeted by the Soviet scientists inviting Prof. C. V. Raman of the University of Calcutta and Prof. Raman paid an eloquent tribute to the quiet constructive work going on in Russia. But the most illuminating book recently published in India was the *Letters from Russia* in Bengali by Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, who paid a short visit to the country in 1930. Almost simultaneously appeared *Humanity Uprooted* by Maurice Hindus from America, and serious people began to think furiously if everything Russia does is really inhuman or that in and through the violent oscillations of their national life the Russians were struggling to solve some real problems of humanity. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru also has visited Russia and has published his impressions and experiences.

The author of the present volume will strike us all as an earnest enquirer who wanted to know something of Russia directly and not through the printed sheets of interested propaganda. Starting in January, 1933, he visited some of the outstanding institutions of Leningrad and Moscow and is now offering the itinerary of his tour to his countrymen. His simple and unassuming narrative will appeal to many, specially because he maintains throughout the in-

dividuality of his judgment, refusing to be overcome by the Soviet propaganda. His personal observations on morality and social Life, the religious and anti-religious tendencies, the relation between the peasants and industrial proletariat, to mention only a few things, will prove interesting reading. The author has shown courage in undertaking the journey to Russia and courage always brings its own reward—the direct contact with reality. Russia is neither a heaven of solution of all our problems, as many innocent enthusiasts imagine, nor is it the hell of diabolical intrigues for a world conflagration through perpetual class-war, as many anti-Soviet thinkers suspect. It is just a major revolution of our century like the Industrial revolution and the French revolution in the eighteenth century, but it is a revolution which within 20 years of its course is already assuming an evolutionary characteristic. That probably explains why the United States of America have already recognised the USSR. and that on the eve of its being invited into the fold of the League of Nations, Sir John Simon observed: "If the Soviet applied for the League membership, it will be welcomed by Britain. Slowly but steadily Soviet Russia is marching ahead of the Trotskyan cult of "Permanent Revolution" to the inhabitability of world co-operation.

KALIDAS NAG

PREFACE

With the progress of civilization new ideas and theories are developing to advance the cause of humanity and to make the world happy and prosperous. The latest of these is Communism. Those, so long followed, are said to be wrong and disastrous for the general mass. They claim all the theories,—whatever be their names—Imperialism, Democracy or Oligarchy and even the latest of them, Fascism,—only help a certain sect of the society, who are only a minority of the general humanity and it is only by Communism, it is further claimed, that the general mass can be lifted to a higher level and thereby the general prosperity and happiness of the world regained. This theory of Marx, was put into practice by N. Lenin in Russia and the whole world is now gazing at her with eager eyes to see how she is shaping her things according to this new ideology.

Russians are not yet Communists: they are still working on socialistic plans, which, they say, are a means to the end—Communism.

Nowadays, in almost every country, there are certain sections of the intelligentsia and the mass who either profess publicly or cherish at heart the ideology of Communism. We often hear of labour strikes, peasant revolts or communistic fights, in almost every part of the civilized world. But, I doubt if a few of the partakers, or even leaders, who preach the theories of Marx and Lenin, have any definite knowledge of the actual happenings at the birthplace of the

ideology and how they are shaping things there, as also the practical difficulties, encountered by them.

Attracted by the mystery of this land of the Reds, whose horrors fill the pages of the foreign Press, I visited Russia in 1933 and tried to see whatsoever possible, within the limited time I had at my disposal. On my return, I published some of my impressions in several issues of *The Modern Review* which, to my great delight, was received by the reading public very cordially. I, therefore, present here the whole story of my tour to them.

I should mention here that the coverpage-design has been taken from the front page of the Socialist Construction in the USSR, published by *VOKS*.

I express my deep and sincere gratitude to Srijut Ramananda Chatterjee, the well-known journalist, who has very kindly gone through the proofs and to Dr. Kalidas Nag who has written the Foreword.

Different authorities on Russia, even Russian authors, have spelt some of the technical words, e.g., Kolkhoz, Fabkom, etc., differently, so the spelling in this book may not coincide with those used by some authorities.

As I have narrated my tour serially and have not tried to write articles on particular subjects in different chapters I could not avoid dealing one subject in different places. I hope, however, to be excused for this.

NITYANARAYAN BANERJEE

MAY, 1934,
Labpur, Birbhum.

CONTENTS



Nicolai Lenin

RUSSIA TODAY

The train stopped at Leningrad after a long run of fourteen hours from Helsinki or Helsingfors, the capital of Finland. It was a cold winter morning of January, 1933. Snow was falling incessantly like white feather; green was blotted out of the earth; the severe winter had sucked out all green—the emblem of life—and left the earth bloodless, wan—pure snow-white. Fields were white, the roofs of the buildings and huts were white, evergreen trees were white and bent down under the heavy weight of the snow. Oh, it was a terrible morning—a morning which one feels through every nerve, and remembers for life—the temperature was 20 degrees below O centigrade. The train emptied itself within a few minutes. I had one English-speaking gentleman in my compartment, whom I requested to help me by finding out the " Intourist " man who was to take charge of me under the arrangement with the " Intourist," the State tourist company. The gentleman asked his porter to bring down my luggage too and searched for the man who, I was told by the Intourist-in-charge at Copenhagen where I had booked myself for Russia, was sure to come and wait for me at the station. We waited for about five

minutes—which was enough to freeze a man from a tropical country. My hands were aching, the toes had grown numb, the ears turned red, the handkerchief became wet and nostrils swollen—it was terrible for me, but I was almost helpless. I could not speak the language of the country, but that was no great hindrance;—the very thought that this was a country having laws quite different from others, a land where the rich were the unfortunates and were a menace to the society, barred me from hiring a taxi or calling a porter. Who knows how to pay the porter—if I paid him direct I might be found guilty by the socialist State, but what to do in that horrible cold? I just walked up and down the platform. My companion went to find the Intourist man. Walking kept me a little warm: I was cursing this new country for its bad arrangements, for this cold reception to a newcomer who was coming under State arrangement.

A young lady stepped before me and asked in quite good English, "Are you coming from Copenhagen?"

"Yes, are you the Intourist agent?" "Yes," and without any apology for being late she asked a porter to carry my luggage to the car which was waiting outside the station. Her very sight was a consolation for me. I felt myself secure. We

went up to the car. The porter was given a chit, not cash.. The car moved on and we began to talk like old friends. Seeing us talking and laughing anyone would have hardly believed that we had met each other for the first time just a few minutes before. Her ways were charming. She wiped out the picture of the Russian I was harbouring so long in my mind—a hard, rough man without a hearty laugh or sense of humour and art. The Russian seemed to me now the same sort of person as I had seen in the other civilized countries of Europe. I said, " It seemed to me the number of porters in the station is insufficient." She smiled and said: " Yes, because nowadays every one carries his own luggage. There are no bourgeois now who require a porter to carry an attache case."

" But in case of heavy luggage a porter is needed."

" Yes," said she, " and there are some for that. You see we require so many labourers in our factories and fields that we can spare very few for this sort of work."

As the car passed through the streets of Leningrad some incomplete houses came to my notice. I asked the reason. She replied, " In winter it is difficult to do outdoor work. Now they are all working in factories and some are sent to collective farms. During the summer they will be called out to do all

this outdoor work." I paused a while and asked, "In summer your agricultural work too goes on in full swing, you require outdoor labourers for all these construction works and surely your factories do not sleep in those days. So, if all the workers are accommodated in factories now and if they are taken out in summer, either your factories suffer for want of labour or you can't really employ all the workers in the factories."

She exclaimed, "Oh yes, we are in great need of labourers. We have not got enough." I again asked her, "Well, now you have plenty of work to do. You are creating a new country. You are converting an agricultural country into an industrial one. You have many waste lands to dig and make mines, new plants to erect, new roads and buildings to construct. So, you can give employment to so many labourers. But one day this progress must come to an end. New creations must stop when consumption will be less than production, as was the case in America. What will you do then? How will you employ so many workers who are working now? On that day the unemployment question will be as grave a problem for you as it is now for the capitalist countries."

She replied with her characteristic smile, "No, certainly not. Russia is not America. This unem-

ployment has been caused by the exploitation of the capitalists—but here there is no exploiter—none is eager to make profit at the cost of others' labour. If we see we are producing more than we consume by working a seven-hour day, we will not cut down the labour but the working hour. We had an eight-hour working day. Already we have made it seven and when possible we may reduce it to 6, 5 or 4 hours."

We passed through a narrow gate which she pointed out as the old main entrance of the town proper. Beyond this gate rich merchants used to live in the Tsar's time. The people seemed to be poor in terms of capitalist countries. All over Europe except this " new country " the smart and genteel appearance of the people, their neat dresses, shining cars, streets lined with glass shop-windows at once tell about the wealth and the standard of living of the people there, but Russia seemed different—very different.

The tram cars—two, three or sometimes four, connected together, were running along the streets with several passengers hanging on the foot-board holding a rod. Seldom does a motor car come in sight. Not a single shop with a fine display came to my notice. The roads were slippery, as the snow was pressed down hard on them.

The car reached its destination—the " October Hotel," a palatial building with a modern revolving

glass door, a fine staircase and spacious well-equipped rooms. I was taken to the Secretary of the Hotel, a young educated man. I did not like to miss this opportunity to have a talk with a Russian youth. I asked about the mode of payment and came to know that everyone is paid by the State according to his merit—an engineer gets more than an ordinary factory labourer, the manager of a hotel earns more than the waiter, and the only difference with the capitalist countries is that they do not allow any private business or private property. I could not grasp the idea and asked, "If the difference in remuneration exists, how can you wipe out classes? It may be, you have abolished all classes of the Tsar's time, but you are sure to create another series of classes."

He said, "You mean some will have more money than others, but how can it create classes?"

—"As it did in the past. Europe had no notable religious class distinctions. Money made these distinctions, and you know it pretty well."

With burning eyes he replied, "But, my friend, money has lost its value in Russia unlike other countries. Suppose anybody earns and reserves more money than others. But what can he do with that? He can't float a business of his own, can't buy a building of his own, can't have a pleasant drive in his own car, can't make any provision for his son

to eat on idly; the only things he c[illegible] are that he can go to the cinema or opera thrice or four times a week, may have three pairs of good shoes, instead of one, a good dish of dinner, or three or four chairs and two tables and that's all. And even then after his death all the unnecessary property will be confiscated by the State. So how can a class grow again?"

—"But you can't deny that still two distinct classes remain—one of you and her (pointing to the guide) having nice clean dresses, good shoes, fine fur coats and a smart finish and the other of the proletariat, as you say, having dirty, patched clothes, overcoats of sheepskin, torn shoes and brown faces, strong iron arms with so many nerves prominent on them." He seemed to get excited and said, "We are the proletariat." I laughed and said, "Oh, I don't admit, you are of the upper class and you have class distinctions."

—"Yes, but you know," he confessed, "we are not yet communists but socialists. When we will have communism, there will be no cash exchange—none will be paid in cash—every one must work—must give the community what he can, and he will get what he needs, neither more nor less. Socialism is a step to it, the means to the end, not the end. We have to train the people, to train their minds to accept this new idea. So our progress is bound to be slow.

That day there will be no classes amongst us."

—"Well, when do you expect to have it?"

—"After fifteen, thirty or fifty years—none can say when, but we must have it one day." His eyes sparkled—his face had lines of determination.

I asked, "Do you think it will be possible to supply everyone's needs? Suppose I want to have an—evening drive daily in a car—will the State allow it?"

—"Oh yes, if the State has sufficient cars to supply everybody—otherwise one car may be given to three or four families or they may get the car every alternate day—everything will be given equally to every member of the community."

—"Well, if I see that my necessities will be supplied by the State, why shall I labour?"

—"Oh, you will be forced to do it—unless you work you will not be helped by the State—you will not be given the rationing card—you must starve."

—"If I am forced to work," asked I, "it is quite natural for me not to work with my full capacity."

—"Yes, but that is your capitalist mentality. We are creating a new generation who will love to work, who will think of the idler as a traitor, a menace to society, who are taught that their only religion is to work for society."



The first residence of the Central Committee of the Communist Party Leningrad. From the arrow-marked balcony Lenin delivered his first lecture after his return from foreign land.

My guide intervened and said, "Well, Mr. Baneryee (that is how they pronounce 'Banerjee,') you should now go to the dining hall and be ready, so that I can take you out as early as possible."

The secretary gave me several tickets for meals and asked me not to lose any, as it meant the loss of one meal. I was accompanied by my guide to a room where I found several other tourists. They were leaving Leningrad that day. Amongst them three came from America, one of whom was a thin young lady, and one was from Australia.

I asked them, "How did you like Russia?"

All of them exclaimed unanimously, "Wonderful." The gentleman from Australia, moving his bald head and swinging his strong long muscular arm in the air, said, "You see they have no unemployment. Isn't it wonderful—they have done miracles."

—"But you see they ruthlessly suppress the public opinion against them—the people have lost their individual independence and how can you praise it?" was my question. The lady replied, "That happens in every country. They allow only that much liberty which they think will not do any harm to the existing Government and not more. Look at the shootings on the unemployed in our country, look at the treatment of the hunger marchers by the British police, look at the Fascists in Italy, the treatment

towards the Natsis by the German Government (at that time the Natsis were declared an illegal body in Germany). What do you see in all these so-called democratic countries? Only party rule, and Russia is not an exception."

—"Well then, what can Russia boast of? What new thing has she given to her people? What has she gained at the cost of so much bloodshed?"

—"The masses are the masters of the country instead of a handful of men, and that's a great achievement," said she.

—"And those handful of men are now ruled, exiled, and hanged like beasts," added I.

The Australian gentleman shouted, "That's natural." I was surprised to see what influence Russia had on these people of America, the hot-bed of capitalism. Their guide came in and intimated that 'the car was ready.' They bade farewell and went out. The Australian gentleman said, "Hope to meet you again in Moscow."

I took my dinner—one of the worst I had in my life. The only things I could take were pieces of boiled potatoes and one slice of brown bread and that was without butter. The black bread was rancid and I doubt whether dogs could relish it. I said to the in-charge, "I do not take beef or pork. So, please arrange for fish, fowl or mutton." Fowl and mutton

were out of the question—the only thing I got was a piece of tinned fish vying with the salt itself for saline taste. I enquired if milk was available. The reply was in the negative. Even 'chai' or tea was served without milk. The dining hall was quite clean. The waiters were well-dressed. There was an orchestra party. Some well-dressed gentlemen came to my notice in the restaurant. They did not look like foreigners. Later I came to know that my guess was true. So, now in Russia some can come and have their meals in a good restaurant accompanied by sweet music, while others are labouring hard outside amidst the snow, with ragged sheepskins on their bodies and with shoes down at heel, about to swallow anything with their greedy jaws. Still they say, "We have abolished classes."

This October Hotel was originally a hotel in the Tsar's time. It is situated just before the Moscow station near the post office. It has steam-heating arrangement. Every room has a bath-room of its own and all modern comforts.

I was waiting for the guide and getting impatient with her for wasting my time. She came at about three in the afternoon with another lady whom I had seen before with the American party. The young lady said: "Now I shall bid you farewell—my comrade will show you everything." I felt it like a

loss to lose a pretty companion in a country like Russia, but there was no help. She was only to receive visitors from the station and take them to the hotel. Her duty ended there. My new guide also could speak good English and though she was not pretty she had a laughing face and keen intelligence. She too made me an old friend within a few minutes and asked what places I would like to see. I replied, "Everything, but specially your society, your factories, agriculture and art."

"Well then, let us go to the opera today, as there is scarcely any time to visit any other place. Almost all the places of interest will be closed within half an hour or so. So it will be useless to go anywhere else."

—"But I think I shall have to pay extra for it, probably, it is not included in my inclusive tour."

With a smile she said, "I am afraid it is not—you shall have to pay for it and it will be convenient for you to have a taxi which will wait for you there and bring you back to the hotel."

"Aren't you coming with me?" asked I.

—"I am very sorry, I won't be able to keep late hours as I am feeling too tired today. I have had to rest on my legs practically the whole day with the American tourists."

As I did not want to waste any time there and had

a desire to see the Russian theatre I agreed to go to the opera. She said, "Then I should go now because I shall have to make arrangements for your seat in the opera. It is not always available." She went off. Sitting beside the glass windows I was looking over this new city of Leningrad, the mother of Leninism. This is the city where Marxism first got root and flowered—it was in this city that the revolution was first declared.

In the evening the guide accompanied me in a taxi to the opera. She had got the ticket beforehand but she had to run from one door to another to get admission. Though I was given a ticket no seat was available—an extra chair had to be brought in for me. The guide bade good-night.

The stage was a huge one. The auditorium was an eight-storeyed building. The spectators of the highest storey could hardly be recognized. The stall, ground-floor and all the storeys were packed. I had to pay more than one pound to secure a seat almost in the last row. But that was because I was a foreigner and did not hold the "labour-ticket." The labourers have special concessions everywhere—in theatres, cinemas, retail shops, dispensaries, schools, factories, food-stores, hotels. They pay eight or ten times less than we or the "Nepmen" do. I have seldom seen any theatre on the Continent with such a huge audi-

torium and so packed. I recalled the foolish people who had said that Russia did not love art and had destroyed it. What other country has brought art so near to the masses as Russia? The people here in the auditorium seemed different from those whom I had seen in the streets. Here almost everyone had decent dresses—some young ladies had even eye-veils, cosmetics on their faces and opera-glasses in their hands. Some youths were dressed in the full evening dress. During the first few years after the revolution Russia had banished all sorts of amusements. I was told dance-halls were forcibly closed—fox-trot was a great offence, none dared to go to the restaurants, which were mainly for foreigners, as they might be marked by the terrible G. P. U., the secret police department, as bourgeois. But nowadays as Russia has brought the situation under control, the people think themselves out of the danger zone. There is now very little chance of losing what they have earned with their blood, and amusements and various means of recreation are gradually making their way into Russia. Nowadays Russians throng in the dance-halls like bees, though the number of halls is still few. Theatres are packed. cinemas overcrowded, night-life can be seen in Russia, the land of the terrorists. During one of his recent speeches Kaganovitch, who is next to Stalin in influence, has declared that new dance-halls and amuse-

ment houses are to be constructed in course of the Second Five-year Plan.

I could not understand a single word of the play. As it was an opera, there were plenty of songs, and some of the singers had beautiful voices. The orchestra was one of the finest I have ever heard. About fifty men were playing on instruments of different types creating a pathetic low tune which vibrated and resounded from one wall to the other and that was really a dream. Though the scenes were not gorgeous yet they were beautiful. I had never seen such a realistic and beautiful full-moon and blue sky on any stage. It was bathed with the soft blue of a moon-lit night. One thing readily attracted the notice of a foreigner—the wonderful discipline of the Russians. There was no noise during the intervals in the auditorium, though there were several thousands of spectators there. There were no hawkers crying "chocolates, cigar, cigarettes," no brisk collection of tea cups or beer glasses. There were no half-naked ballet girls with dresses which coincided with every curve of the body. No attempt was made to show the woman's figure in its naked form, and no scene exciting sexuality was shown during the whole play as is very common in other parts of the Continent. We say Russians have no morals. Yes, such is the judgment according to our standard of morality, but in some

respects they are more moral than the people of the West and even of the East. The Russians hate the display of naked female figures in the shop-windows as is common in Paris, Berlin, London, Rome or in any other city of Europe. They dislike the idea of keeping shop-girls to attract customers, they never display indecent pictures in the monthlies or dailies to increase the sale. The State is strongly advocating temperance. They have almost abolished prostitution, not only by law, as is the case in England, but also in practice. Many prophylactoria or correction houses were built to which prostitutes were taken and treated and given work. They are taught something so that they may earn their livelihood independently. For one year they are not allowed to leave the house permanently, by which time, the Bolsheviks claim, their mode of living and mentality are changed. But during this one year they are allowed to join any festival or gathering. They are not confined but corrected. After a year or so jobs are found for them and they are employed. Those who pursue this line from habit are again taken in hand and corrected. Formerly prostitution was legalized. They had " yellow tickets " which enabled even Jewish girls to stay in the town. At the beginning of the Five-year Plan in Moscow there were 4,000 prostitutes in five prophylactoria. Now the number is 575 and only one such institution is existing. Is it

not a proof of how they are eradicating immorality? Can the countries which legalized and licensed prostitution claim to be more moral than Russia?

At the end of the play no girl came to my notice standing by the gate with a longing look for prey, as is often seen in London and Paris. Prostitution in USSR has been disappearing so rapidly not only for these prophylactoria but for the equal economic and political status given to the weaker sex by the State. The bread-problem of the poorer classes has been solved—marriage laws relaxed—so those, who formerly followed this pitiable path, being forced by poverty or society, need not now follow it. Only those who adopted this line out of sex-hunger or love for unrestricted life, may still continue in this line, but for them the prophylactoria stand.

The car was ready—I recognized it by its number and drove towards the hotel.

II

It was 9 o'clock in the morning. For the fine arrangement of central steam heating I had a nice sound sleep. I remember a day in Hamburg, where I stayed in a hotel without central heating, although the whole body was in fur-quilt, the head with the brain inside seemed to be frozen, callous—the whole room seemed to be a cold storage and myself a cold piece of meat.

In England too in most of the hotels and pensions one has to have the same experience, as the English people are too conservative to change their gas fire and their small buildings do not justify a central heating arrangement. But in this hotel the heating arrangement was splendid—there was hot and cold water running in the bath-rooms. The breakfast was not a palatable one; I could take only the 'chai' (tea) and a piece of brown bread.

"Good morning, had a nice sleep?" said the smiling face of my guide in the dining room.

"Aren't you ready? Oh, what a lazy fellow you are," added she.

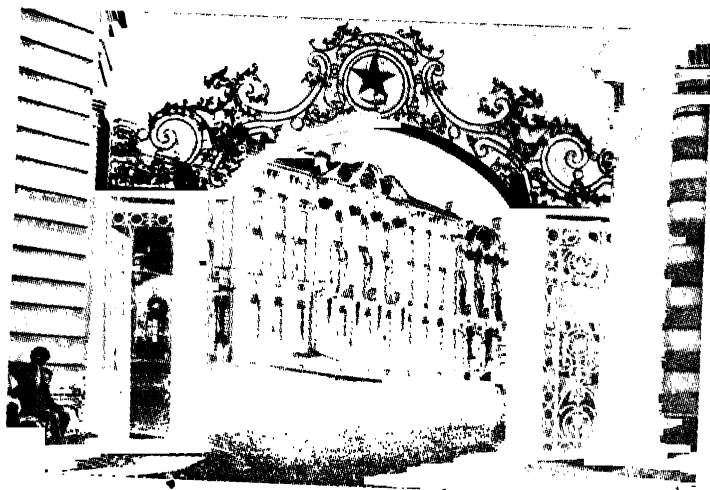
Taking my last sip I said, "Yes I am ready—I was just waiting for you."

"Come on, we should not lose any time today."

"Excuse me, I am bringing my overcoat from my room, a minute please," begged I. The lift



Tverskaya-Yamskaya Road: one of the main streets – Leningrad



Summer Palace of the Tsar Leningrad

brought me up; on the way to my room in the corridor I met some children. They were so nice and charming that I could not help stopping a moment near them. One of them—a girl aged about seven—asked in clear English, "Do you speak English?" I was glad indeed to have a chance to talk with these pretty babies. I asked, "Are you a Russian? How do you speak such good English?" The girl replied, "No, I am an American. My father is an engineer here."

"How long have you been here?"

"About ten months, but you know we are not going to stay here any longer. The Russians are very bad people."

I was eager to know why this little baby was so angry with the Russians. She added, "My father had two years' contract here, but they are treating us very badly. You know they are so naughty that so long they need our service they will worship us, but when they themselves understand the job they try to kick us out but as they made contract with us they cannot do it straight, that is why they are treating us so badly." It was evident that the other two girls could not understand our talk. I asked them, "Can't speak English?" They laughed and said something which I could not understand. The American girl said, "They can't speak English, they are Russians. But I can speak Russian, German and French too." To test her I

asked in German, "How did you learn so many languages?" She began to talk like a machine. "Oh, I had been in Germany for two years and in France a year. My father used to work there." I came to my senses; I had been detaining the guide unnecessarily. They all bent their knees a little and nodded. The American girl enquired, "Will you please come to our music this evening?" I promised to come if I could come back by that time.

The guide advised that it would be convenient to see round the city with a taxi as more things could be seen in a day. I agreed to the proposal. So we had to go to the Intourist office to make arrangements for the taxi. The office was not very far and the temperature was not so terrible; so we walked.

Not a single shop with the fine continental art of display came to my notice. Motor buses were very rare but the Russians hope to have plenty of them very soon, when their own motor factories will begin to produce them. Now as Russia has no credit in the world market she has to buy everything by gold, by selling their food or timber. There are a few hackney carriages, mostly for carrying loads, some with pneumatic tyres. These are still private property. Now Russia has allowed private trade provided no one is exploited by that. There are laws which prohibit employment of any person by any individual

trader except under some special condition. Even the farmers are not allowed to hire labour except in illness or under some such conditions. The revolutionaries have changed their laws regarding private enterprise but not the aim. Now all sorts of private trade can be carried on in Russia by law. But for the heavy taxes, super-taxes and apathy of the State, it is practically impossible to carry on any business on a large scale. The potter may produce his goods and sell them in the open market—the weaver, carpenter, blacksmith peasants or such other individual traders can carry on their trade individually and sell their goods publicly, provided they do not hire any labourers, that is, exploit others' labour, but all private traders are defranchised,—not given ration-cards to have foods cheaper—taxed and that heavily and noticed with a suspicious look. To forfeit one's property is the most common punishment in Russian Courts in case of a private trader. A private trader's son will have the last chance in school, hospital, club and army, his children will have to pay more for their education, food, clothing and lodging. From every side the State is eager to take as much as possible from a private trader, it is their main object to strike the death-blow to individual trading, as that is their greatest enemy. There is no private shopkeeper in Leningrad, no private taxi, house, no immovable personal property:

every thing is owned by the State. If any one incurs the wrath of the State he is sure to starve, as there is none to employ him; if he has money it will be soon exhausted by the heavy prices of goods which a non-labourer must pay. If anyone does the work of a middleman, *i.e.*, buys goods from villages at cheaper rates and sells in towns at higher rates thereby having some profit for himself, he is prosecuted and sentenced heavily.

On the way I saw a boy begging on the foot-path. I jokingly asked the guide, "Well, is it a fact that you have no unemployment and no beggars?"

"Yes it is so—have you any doubt about it?"

Pointing to the boy I said, "He speaks against your statement."

"Ah, those are naughty boys. They are often taken to nurseries by the police—but they are habitual beggars, they fly away from the nursery and begin to beg. They are lazy by blood, probably descendants of former clergies or kulaks; they prefer begging to work. But fortunately they are very few," said she. I commented, "Surely these poor boys are not treated well there. Had they got better and loving treatment, why would they leave the nursery and beg in this cold?"

"You see, by blood they are so idle that they don't like the discipline and work of the nurseries.

You understand?"

"Yes, but why are your people so poor in general? Everyone is insufficiently clothed and probably not well fed. What have you gained by the revolution, by so much blood-shed?" asked I.

She replied, "True it is that we have not got enough clothing to clothe the whole population and not even enough food for the whole nation but in pre-revolutionary days all the people of the nation could not get food even daily, while some of the upper classes used to eat in gold dishes and throw them away—now though we don't get good quality of food, all of us get sufficient food to satisfy hunger, and in our Second Five-Year Plan we will have more light industries, *i.e.*, food and cloth; our standard of living will be raised."

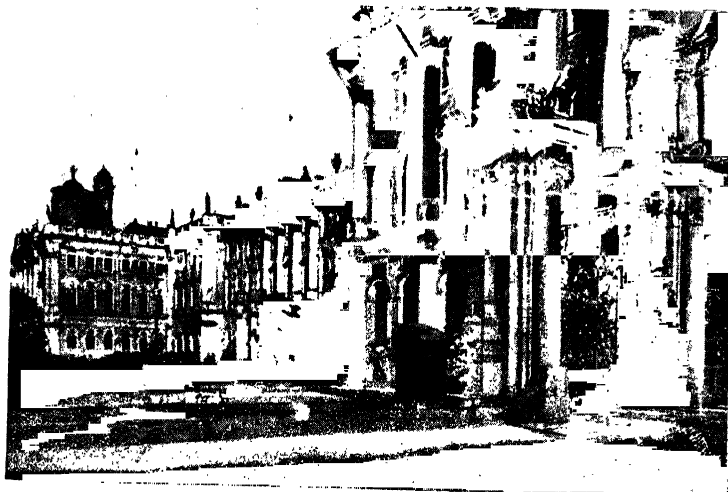
We came before the Intourist office, pushed the revolving glass-door and went inside. It was "Pramila Kingdom," where there are only women. Not a single male clerk came to my notice, all were ladies. I asked my guide, "Well, have you driven out the other sex from office works?"

She replied, "Yes, they have to do heavier works. Factories have absorbed all male labour, so we have to do all these light works."

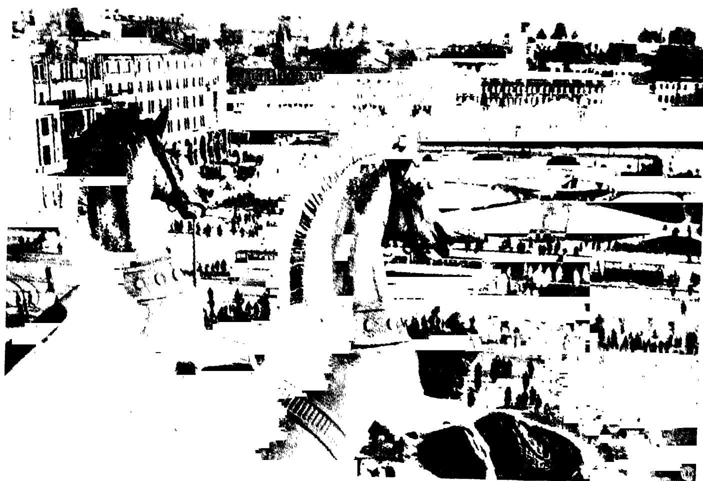
"So you are the bourgeoisie now and the males are the proletariat," smiled I.

" But we never fear heavier works. There are female tractor and locomotive drivers, soldiers and even envoys. Owing to our physical difficulty we may not do some works but we never fear any work," protested she.

This is true. Even the tram drivers and conductors were females. But what a horror is a Russian tram; it is always packed to the inch—about five to seven passengers always hang on the footboard holding the iron handle. At the stoppage it stops for a while, never cares whether the passengers can get in or get out. One has to force his way into the trams but first of all he should make a little place for his one foot to hang on the footboard—then gradually by outside push and through his effort he can make room on the platform. There are only two lines of benches inside, each is broad enough to accommodate one person only. Trams are meant for standing. The window glasses are all smeared with hard snow with a small circular gap caused by the fingers of passengers eager to see their destination. It is impossible to bend down to take anything from the floor. I remember an incident. A passenger before leaving the car cried, " I have lost one shoe—it has just slipped off my foot." Every one bent his head downwards but none dared or could search it because every one is jammed and the poor passenger had to



The Museum of the Revolution (Formerly the Winter Palace)



Sverdlov Square (formerly Theatre Square)

get down with one shoe on. One thing surprised me. The people were so poor, but none was eager to deceive the conductor by not paying the fare which they could easily do, as it was impossible for the conductor to go round everybody for the ticket; but the passengers were passing their money to the conductor through fellow passengers from one corner to the other. It seemed they all thought it their duty to pay the fare, as they knew the tram cars were their own property. The so-called moralist countries should learn the honesty of the Russian poor. If anybody wanted to get down at a certain stoppage he should try to make his way out before two or three stops from the destination. In winter such rush is to some extent relieving, but God knows what it is in the summer.

III

We got down from the tramcar near a "Creche" *i.e.*, "the workers' children's Home" as she told me. We put off our overcoat and over-shoes in the cloak-room and went upstairs. My guide asked the permission of the in-charge, who was a lady, to see the institution. She smilingly agreed and requested us to put on a long milkwhite apron before we went into the children's rooms.

In this Home, children from three months to three years old are brought up. The working mothers get two month's leave before and two months' leave after delivery with full pay. Office-clerks and those who have to do less manual labour get three months' leave. On the third month after delivery they have to go to work. As Russia is trying and has been successful to a great extent to abolish family-life, these Children's Homes became necessary to look after the young three-month old babies. Every mother before going to the factory leaves her child in these Homes where they are carefully looked after and on her way back the mother takes her child home. There are many who say that Russia has no home life; as children are looked after by the State, mothers have lost their affection towards their children; as there are no strict

rules regarding marriage, fathers never care for the children. But surely these allegations are not true. The Children's Homes have freed the mothers from the responsibility of rearing their children and thus enabled them to render their full service to the State. Similarly common kitchen in factories, common laundry, and community-houses have freed half the strength of the country which wasted its energy uneconomically. Formerly, in each family women had to spend their energy in rearing children, cooking, washing, cleaning and doing other household affairs. Now the small family units have been crushed in towns and greater families are made. These families live in Community Houses, have their food from one kitchen, their dresses cleaned from one laundry, they have one library to read in, one club room to meet. But mother's love cannot be washed away by a thousand more such Russian revolutions—it is an inborn instinct —it exists even amongst the birds and beasts, so family-life cannot go. But true it is that the family-life in Russia has taken a different shape from that in any other country and this is due to the new economic policy of the State. For the whole day the child remains in a Children's Home, the mother gets half an hour's leave every day to feed her child and after the day's work she presses her baby on her breast, showers kisses on it, wraps her in cotton bed and takes

it back home to share the delight with her husband. I have seen many a young and old mother in this home to fondle her baby, to kiss it incessantly and press it on her breast to feel the sweet dreamy touch of the angel of heaven. How can family-life go where the family is in the hands of such beloved mothers? In Russia even the conception of motherhood is different from that of any other continental or American countries. The Russian girls think it debauchery to marry with the intention of not having any children: the children are national assets and it is their duty to give the nation more children, healthy and worthy. Of course, the State has made abortion legal, teaching birth-control through its doctors and clinics; but that is only to check unwanted children and to save the health of the mothers; of course, every good thing has its abuses, but that is not to be counted. If abortion is performed outside the State clinic, it is absolutely illegal and punishable with three years' imprisonment. In case of a first-pregnancy abortion is strongly discouraged and is never done after three months of pregnancy. The present shortage of housing system is responsible to a great degree for abortion—as the mothers do not want to have children unless they can have at least a separate room. The State encourages birth-control more than abortion, as it seriously tells upon the health. In the abortion clinics, in cinemas,

radios and papers it carries on vigorous propaganda on birth-control to educate and enlighten the masses on the subject. Ten days' leave is granted to the working women when they undergo the operation. Only one death in 25,000 abortions has been recorded in Moscow clinics, whereas it is estimated that in other European countries, where abortion is illegal, the death-rate is one per cent. Before the age of majority the Russian children are barred from doing any heavy labour and can claim maintenance from the parents. So how can father and mother have no family? But in the Russian family if you want the Hindu or Catholic regard of a son towards parents, probably you will be disappointed. The Russians have no place for sentiments, they are realistic to the backbone. There are a thousand and one examples where a son has denied all connection with a 'Kulak' or (formerly) rich father to have the right of a proletariat.

The Children's Home was spotlessly clean and everything was in order, complete discipline reigned there. First, we were taken into a room having almirahs numbered where the dirty home dresses of the children are taken out and kept in respective shelf of the almirahs according to number. Next, the children are taken to a hall having rows of pots to answer nature's call—then they are bathed

and cleaned, new clean dresses are put on and they are placed in their respective beds. They sleep, play or eat together at fixed hours. I asked, "How is it that these babies even sleep together. Don't some of them cry and disturb others?" The guide interpreted the attending nurse's answer, "No, if from childhood they are taught to do every thing together, they do it and will do it for life."

In the playing room of the Children's Home which I visited, there was a big piano to the accompaniment of which the grown-up children sing and dance and thereby have their daily exercise. There are toys—everything materialistic—aeroplane, ship, torpedo, pump, engine, soldier, not a bogey or a fairy, they do not celebrate the marriage ceremony of daughters and sons, as children in Bengal do, or worship dolls of mythological gods and goddesses. Every boy is given the chance to play with anything, and it is watched what play he likes most. If he likes painting, in his future studies he is encouraged on that particular line; if he shows a tendency towards engineering, the army, agriculture or art, he is given all facilities to take up the line. From their very childhood Russian children are observed and regular records about them are kept. They are not pressed in the same mould—the dictators of Russia realize that there are different materials in different individuals and they should not

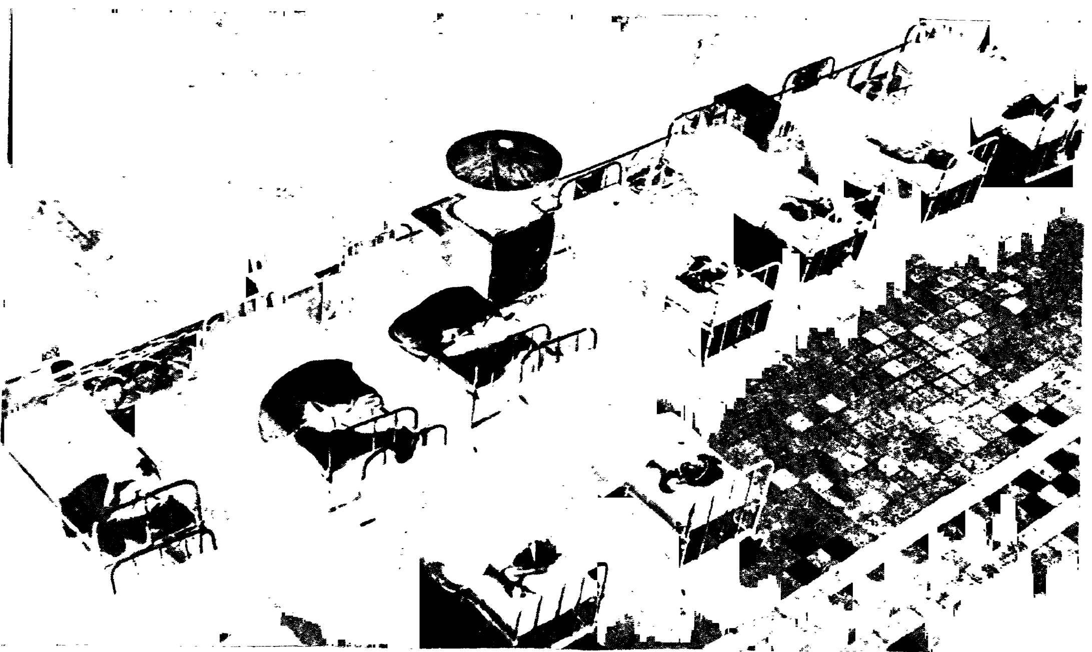
be moulded in the same press.

According to age children are classified and taken care of. In one room about thirty babies were sleeping—the attending nurse was preparing her report of all the children under her care. She has to note daily the temperature, the stool and urine, times it cried and such other technical points. Every baby is given individual attention: every one was sleeping with hands up, the scientific position. If anything is wrong with any child it is segregated and sent to the doctor—his mother may not take her child home, but if necessary she may stay here. Probably the richest man of our country would envy the scientific and hygienic care taken of and attention paid to the Russian workers' children. Finishing my visit, I was requested to put down my opinion in a visitors' book, which I did very gladly. These creches are free to the poorer workers but those who are well-paid, are charged according to their rate of pay. Likewise the abortion-clinics too charge 8 to 13 roubles from those who undergo the operation on purely personal grounds and not on medical advice.

The Intourist sent the taxi and it was ready at the door of the creche. We drove out to see the whole city.

Soon we came beside the Neeva river. Its dancing sparkling waves were frozen white, as if

under the spell of some magician's wand; a vast sheet of wavy snow stretched between the wide banks. We came across many important buildings, among which mention may be made of College and Office of the Navy; Bureau of Labour on the bank of the Neeva, where formerly political prisoners were imprisoned and tortured; the first Residence of the Central Committee of the Communist party, formerly the private residence of Kshesinskaya, from the balcony of which Lenin after his return from foreign lands, where he was exiled, made his first public speech before thousands of his followers; the Red Army Arch, a colossal yellow-coloured building made by the famous architect Rossi in 1819-25, which was and still is the seat of the army, just in front of the well-known winter palace of the Tsar, which has now been converted into the Museum of the Revolution. Beside this huge ornamental building is the world-famous Hermitage, the favourite picture gallery of Tsarist times which was built by General Terborch in 1617-81 (?) and which still contains beautiful original paintings by well-known Italian and French artists. The palaces of the Tsar's sons, daughters and relations are worth seeing. Before one such building, "Panti Palace," is a nice park having the sickle and hammer, the emblem of the Communists, on its bed. In this park, not very far from the Tsar's palace, thousands of revolu-



Children basking in the sun on the roof of a "Creche" (Children's Home)

tionaries died. So it has been named " Square of the Victims of Revolution."

After visiting the important buildings and parks in the city, we took a long drive to the outskirt of the city, where the summer palace of the Tsar stands. This beautiful three-storied building stands the same as it used to do in the Tsar's time; the pieces of furniture are kept as they were, just to show the people how lavishly the king used to spend at the cost of the poor people's labour. It was already too late for lunch. We came back to the hotel in the afternoon.

IV

We went to see a "zag" or marriage and divorce registration office. This was on the second floor ot a huge building, a small office having two clerks and several benches for the couples. We were given a seat near the Registrar's table; the guide interpreted to me the questions and answers of the registrar and the couples.

The willing couple have to deposit only two roubles in the office in the morning, for which they get a number. During the registration hour the registrar calls out the number serially and the couples come before her, produce their passports, which according to the new Russian law everybody has to obtain from the local police as proof of identity. The registrar takes down the names of the bride and groom in her book and the couple are requested to put their signatures in the book. That finishes everything—they are married. The only questions they are asked are, if that was the second marriage of any of the party and their age. Couple after couple came and got married; there was no ceremony, no priest, no friend or bride's maid on the occasions. Probably it takes five minutes to be married in Russia and much less time to be divorced. Any one of the couple may come to the office and say, "I want to be

divorced." That is enough to get a divorce. If the other party be present, so much the better; if not, he will get a post card from this office that he is no longer married, his partner has divorced him, and he will be requested to have his passport endorsed to that effect. The registrar will not ask, why they are divorcing, would not disallow a prayer for divorce for want of any proof about adultery. She may request them to settle the differences, but even that the law does not require. I was shown the books in which notes on marriage and divorce are kept, but could hardly understand anything. Pages of both the books were almost full. I asked the registrar, "What is the percentage of divorce?" She said, "About fifty per cent."

"So much!" exclaimed I.

"But that is a smaller percentage in comparison with America," added my guide.

One of an eager couple came and asked me something which I could not understand. My guide answered him and smilingly said to me, "He asked our number." It was amusing.

I asked, "What did you tell him?"

"Numberless," was her reply.

A young couple took their seat before the registrar. They seemed to me quite young, just about eighteen, the marriageable age in Russia. Another

couple came who seemed quite aged. Both of them were marrying for the second time. So they were asked if they had any children. The answer was in the negative. If there be any children by the first marriage, parents have to maintain them, but, unlike other countries, the entire burden of maintenance is not only on the father; if the father does not earn, the mother has to bear the burden of maintenance. The amount of alimony varies according to the earnings of the parents, but if one party is totally incapable of earning, it may claim one-third of the other's earnings. As a rule, in case of divorce, the children stay with the mother, but if she ill-treats them or is a drunkard or moral reprobate, the father may claim the children. Whenever there is a divorce, the parents try to come to a mutual settlement regarding children and their maintenance; if they fail to do so, they have to go to the court. Registration of marriage is not absolutely necessary by law in Russia. If a male and a female so like, they can live together as husband and wife, neither the state nor society will condemn it. But this free mating sometimes causes much trouble when there is litigation for alimony. In such difficulties fatherhood is determined on the evidence of friends and relatives. If they say that the man used to live with her and most probably the child is his, he has to pay for its maintenance. This may be one

of the chief reasons why Russia inspite of so much laxity in relations between the two sexes has not turned into a land of debauchery. When one hears that in Russia male and female can live together without any restriction, he thinks naturally that the females in Russia are so many prostitutes and the males also are debauches of the lowest grade. But in fact it is far from so. To me it seemed the Russians were much more moral than other nations of the continent. What do we see in Europe? In all civilized countries women dress themselves in such a fashion as will readily attract the attention of men; in society, dinner and dances both men and women try to make themselves prominent, not among themselves, but before the eyes of the other sex; but in Russia this sex suggestiveness is totally absent. Men and women travel together in the same compartment of the train day and night, they have their sunbath in summer on the river banks side by side with scanty bathing costume or with no constume at all; in processions males and females march side by side without the slightest sex sensibility. Seduction is a great offence in Russia —to Russians it is exploitation of sex. One must be true and sincere in his love. One may divorce and get married at his will; but if it be proved that it is his nature to do so, he is sentenced to imprisonment. Amongst the youths of the universities and

colleges sex life should be more complex. The male and female students eat, sit, and sing together, live in the same dormitory, though in separate rooms. But they can go to each other's room, may fall in love, even mate and have children. Neither the authorities nor the fellow-students will frown on it. If two students want to live a married life, registered or not, they are allowed to do so. If they have a child, the mother may still proceed with her studies, leaving the child in University nurseries. But if it is proved, that any student, male or female, enjoys sexual life casually, where there is really no love but the desire of satisfaction stands prominent, he is disciplined and reprimanded. Love has got all licence but seductiveness is banned. If anybody infects his mate with any venereal disease, even if they be husband and wife, he or she is punished with one year's imprisonment.

An old woman came to assist the registrar as she could not cope with the heavy work. We were sitting just beside the table and probably looking to be a couple. The old woman gravely asked; "Yes, your number please?"

My guide burst into laughter this time and interpreted to me her question. The registrar, too, began to laugh and explained to her assistant that we were mere visitors. The old lady joked: "I am sure you will be a permanent guide of some



general view of the Kremlin and Moscava river

fortunate foreigner one day."

My guide said: "Why one day, make it today."

I objected, "But we have no number."

The old assistant replied, "Never mind. We can number you right now. Ready?"

I said, "I am yellow-coloured, so your white friend will not agree."

My laughing guide exclaimed: "If I agree, are you ready?"

This time I was cornered. The registrar intervened and said, "Last year I married an Indian with a Russian girl."

I murmured: "But I am already married."

My guide burst into surprise: "Are you really?"

We came out into the streets but my guide would not let me stop about my marriage. She showered questions after questions. "How many years ago were you married?—What is your wife's age? Is she beautiful? How long did your courtship last?"—and a hundred more such other questions. Hearing from me that we have no courtship before marriage, she gasped with surprise.

"How do you marry then?"

"Our parents choose the bride—"

"And you marry?" Her eyes were about to come out in surprise.

She paused. "It is shocking to imagine, how you do so."

"That is our custom—"

"But that's a rotten custom, you should change it. Shouldn't you?"

We came back to our hotel for tea. In the evening we again went out to see the Art Gallery. But ere going there we had to go again to Intourist office to have my passport and ticket for Moscow, which were with them. That is a nice trick of the Soviet Government. As soon as one enters the Russian frontier they will search every corner of his suit-cases, every envelope and will make a note of the foreign money and jewelleries one carries. He will be allowed to take out that amount of money and jewellery which are endorsed in the passport and will be required to show the cash memo in the frontier for any thing bought in Russia. Throughout his stay in Russia the Passport is kept in Government custody, probably to have strict control over foreigners. It is only delivered to the holder when travelling from one city to another. At least this was so in my case. The Office work of the Intourist did not seem to be very efficient: they take too much time to handle simple things. When I was just going out of the Intourist office a tall, black figure checked my motion. I was very glad to see a non-white man who evidently was from





A pioneer-student

India. He was kind enough to step forward and ask "Are you an Indian?"

—"Yes. Are you too?" Asked I.

—"Surely, can't you recognise that. May I know your name?"

I answered his question when he said "I am a Chatterjee."

I was extremely glad to see another Bengalee there and asked him his detailed whereabouts in India. He is Mr. Harindra Chatterjee, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu's brother and son of Sj. Aghornath Chatterjee. He is a professor of Leningrad University. I had to leave Leningrad that very night, so I was really awfully sorry not to see Mr. Chatterjee again, from whom I could have gathered much more about the real condition of Russia.

V

We went to see the Art Museum. This is not free but a nominal fee is to be paid. For that fee a well-informed guide takes the visitors through the galleries and explains the techniques, the period, the idea of the pictures and sculptures there.

As the Hermitage contains the old school art this museum solely consists of paintings, portraits and sculptures of the after-revolution period. If anybody just studies the paintings systematically according to period he may have an idea of the development of mentality in Russia from the date of the revolution up till now. The pictures are arranged in different halls according to their period. Exhibits of different periods were arranged in separate halls—I mean pictures, stones, utensils, clothing, etc., were placed in one hall instead of placing them separately in different halls, to give the visitors an idea of the age.

Just after the revolution the people's mind was overwhelmed with famine and civil war; the paintings of that period portray vividly the mental worries of the people at that period. Not only pictures but dramas, novels, short stories, songs, every thing of art was created with that sad theme in it. After that period when the opponent forces where subdued the Bolshevik youths plunged into drinking and debau-



MADONNA LITA
After a painting attributed to Leonardo da Vinci
now in the Hermitage Gallery, Leningrad

chery. With everything else they took the women too to be socialised and often there were cases when individuals or groups used to outrage the modesty of women freely without any privacy and restriction, even forcibly. The Russian youth at this stage revolting against religion defied every social law enjoined by religion. That was a horrible period—a period when the masses were maddened by the spur of the new freedom and the intellectuals were perplexed by the horrible result of the revolution and were searching for a better way to peace and social order. The famous Russian novels "Three pairs of silk stockings," "The Embezzlers," "Squaring the circle" and others give vivid pictures of this state of Russia.

Next was the period of the Five-Year Plan, the time for the constructive programme. Everywhere there was routine, some definite plan of production, system and discipline. There are pictures of labourers working in mines, factory-buildings, new club houses, workshops—toiling before red furnaces, black smokes; pictures of collective farms, common dining halls and other works and ideals of the State. There are paintings of fruits and flowers, landscape and huts but not a single picture of an angel or fairy, heaven and hell, or even Christ, or anything imaginary. The Russians of today are extremely realistic, they even turned all fairy tales and fables out of Russian children's books.

Only very recently they are again allowing imaginary tales and fables in juvenile story-books but that even is not of mermaids and witches but of miraculous attainments of the new society and its ideals.

During this very short time after revolution many new techniques in colouring and drawing have been adopted and given up. These things show how revolutionary were the Russians against anything old and how restless were they. But though the art of this period took a very different shape from the old yet it must be admitted that it was not towards anything better.

All the pictures, novels, stories, dramas had to be created with an object, the furthering of the Revolutionary cause. The then all-powerful " Rapp "—the society of the proletariate, to control art forced everything of art to be objective. Every book, every picture, every song should have the object of preaching the communistic ideals. No drama could be played which showed any sympathy with any bourgeois character. All dramas had to be moulded in the same press; the proletariate are always noble and the kulaks, the capitalists, always villainous, wicked, a menace to society. All characters were either absolutely noble or roguish: they were deprived of real human nature. The same principle had to be followed in novels, short stories, poems and other sec-

tions of art. Lyric poems were not allowed to be written; gypsy music was forbidden: even films featuring Harold Lloyd were banned. That was a terrible time for Russian art. There was no art for art's sake, it was dictated by the " Rapp " to suit the cause of the Revolution. Many well-known novelists and playwrights had to stop writing or had to sacrifice their originality to the sword of dictatorship. As a result of this cruel " Rapp " reign, real art bade farewell to Russia; but fortunately Russians were prompt enough to realise this calamity to art and by a special decree on April 23, 1932, the Rapp was dissolved.

The following resolution was passed in the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party to abolish the " Rapp."

RESOLUTION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
OF THE ALL-RUSSIAN COMMUNIST PARTY
23rd April, 1932

The Central Committee has ascertained that, as a result of considerable successes of socialist construction, literature and art have in the past few years, exhibited a considerable growth, both in quality and quantity.

Some years ago, when literature was still under the strong influence of certain alien elements, which were particularly flourishing in the first years of

NEP, and when the ranks of Proletarian literature were still comparatively feeble, the party helped, by every means in its power, the creation of special Proletarian organizations in the spheres of literature and art, with a view to strengthening the position of Proletarian writers and art workers.

Now that the rank and file of Proletarian literature has had time to grow and establish itself, and that new writers and artists have come forward from factories, mills, and collective farms, the framework of the existing Proletarian literary-artistic organizations (VOAPP, RAPP, RAMP, etc.), is becoming too confined and impedes the serious development of artistic creation. There is thus the danger that these organizations might be turned from a means of intensive mobilization of Soviet writers and artists around the problems of Socialist construction into a means of cultivating hermetic groupings and of alienating considerable groups of writers and artists, sympathizing with the aims of Socialist construction, from contemporary political problems.

Hence the necessity for a corresponding reconstruction of the literary-artistic organizations and for the extension of the basis of their work.

Therefore the Central Committee resolves:

(*i*) To liquidate the association of Proletarian writers (VOAPP, RAPP);

(*ii*) To unite all writers upholding the platform of the Soviet power and striving to participate in Socialist construction into a single Union of Soviet Writers with a Communist section therein;

(*iii*) To promote a similar change in the sphere of other forms of art;

(*iv*) To entrust the Organizing Bureau with the working out of practical measures for the carrying out of this resolution.

C. C. A. C. P.

People were tired of political sermons in newspapers, mass-meetings, factory debates, radio, and cinemas. So they wanted recreation in novels, dramas, paintings and cinemas, instead of political teachings.

Many prominent writers and critics voiced their discontent publicly and vehemently. In 1929 Viatcheslav Polonsky, one of the prominent critics of Russia, said in the course of his speech in a dispute about "social command" in which writers like Kogan, Pilnyak, Brik and others took part:

" Our task is to destroy the attitude which regards the artist as a bale of goods, to kill the critic as a middleman, and to abolish the situation which renders the artist a mere individual, condemned to make a trade of his gift to satisfy the necessities of distinct social groups, even if under the proud banner of the theory of "social command." We want the artist to

be an organic part of the class, to form that sinuosity of the collective brain which by its position in the complex brain-system is destined to express the æsthetic, psychological, emotional, and ideological necessities of Collective Man."

Consequently with the abolition of the "Rapp" Russian art flowed in different directions, it came back to its proper chanel. True it is that even now there is strict censorship on art, but the censor only objects if there is anything against the State. The newspapers can criticise state policies and programmes but only on constructive lines, not in the other direction. In Moscow Daily News I have seen letters criticising vehemently some programme of the State; there are "Counter Plannings," that is, modifications or criticisms of Plans submitted by the State Planning Commission of Moscow. In "Voks," the bi-monthly illustrated English periodical of Moscow, I have seen appreciation and criticisms of Soviet works. From the contents of one issue of this periodical one may have an idea of the subjects dealt with there.

Through the Union of the Soviets	M. GORKY.
The Economic and Cultural Development of the Far East Region	A. BUTSENKO.
The conditions of Labour and the Personnel Problem in the Soviet Oil Industry	K. MARKOVICH.
At the Soviet Factory	N. TINOVSKY.

Now writers may deal with real life, they are free from dictation.



La Colombine
A Picture in Hermitage, Leningrad

The authorities are now giving real effect to the resolutions passed in 1925 in the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party.

"....The party must exhibit patience towards transitional ideological forms........The party must vigorously oppose thoughtless and contemptuous treatment of the old cultural heritage as well as of the literary specialists......It must likewise combat the tendency towards a purely hot-house proletarian literature."

"....Communist criticism ought to dispense with the tone of literary command...."

"....The party cannot admit by decree or proclamation any legal monopoly of literary production on the part of any one group or literary organization......The party cannot give this monopoly to any group, not even to the proletarian group itself...... The technical achievements of the old masters must be considered, and a corresponding form, comprehensible to millions, must be worked out......"

New pictures are again appearing in Russia. The latest paintings seemed to proceed fast to compete with famous Italian and French Paintings. Novels and Dramas dealing with love and romance may again be written, films featuring Harold Lloyd are making their appearance. The Russians have now realised their madness. They

have gained the experience that dictatorship may build factories and farms, but not art. Still Russian literature always smacks of Revolution, it has not altogether given it up—cannot give it up, because its creators are revolutionaries. Georgyi Gorbatchev, a Left-wing Communist critic, draws up a balance-sheet of literary achievement up to 1926 from which the reader may have a clear idea of the different groups of writers—which have developed after the revolution.

A BALANCE-SHEET

"Russian literature in 1926 presents an entirely different picture from that in 1923, at the moment of the Pilnyak-Erenburg predominancy in our literary development. In spite of all the difficulties involved in drawing sharp, social distinctions between various related writers, we may boldly divide contemporary literature into class groups.

On the left flank stands Proletarian Literature, already showing rapid ideological and artistic consolidation and quantitative increase. It treats of the most actual themes of contemporary society and follows the path of a healthy, critical and revolutionary-spirited realism. Its future is assured, and it already has the considerable and growing attention of the more socially active mass of readers.

Next to Proletarian Literature comes the literature

of the Fellow-Travellers, of writers, that is, reflecting the temper of the peasantry and of the revolutionary intelligentsia. From the artistic point of view, this group is still responsible for the best literary output. Its themes are less actual than those of Proletarian Literature, its attention is devoted in a greater degree to the past (chiefly to the recent past), and its resolution of problems is less daring than with proletarian writers. The Fellow-Travellers are submitting more and more to the ideological hegemony of the proletariat and of its literature, and are, in their turn, increasingly influencing proletarian writers by their technical achievements.

Next comes a group of writers who attempt to remain neutral in the social sense, or who are as yet undecided about certain problems raised by the Revolution. These are either intellectuals who have not fully outlived the traditions of the past or people who are connected with wavering peasant elements. This group numbers some very considerable artists whom it is the ideological task of Proletarian Literature to win over. At this "centre" begins the right flank of literature, which is, further, divided into two groups. The first comprises writers of a definite neo-bourgeois ideology (Hya Erenburg, Alexei Tolstoy, Bulgakov) or reactionary gentry writers (Slonimsky, Zoshtchenko), or intellectuals become entangled in a net of

reactionary ideology (Pilnayak). This group is evo ing or lowering itself towards the demand of the "street." This group, however, might find a new lease of life under favourable kulak and NEP-man conditions, when its ranks would be swollen by new writers coming from the left as well as the right groups. This latter, the extreme right group, comprises closely bound Soviet as well as old emigre bourgeois-gentry or new emigre writers (Aldanov). This reactionary group is writing less, more feebly, and has altogether lost actual significance, though, through its organization, the Writers' Union, it exercises a strong influence on all non-Proletarian writers.

The lines of the conflict are clearly demarcated. The conflict lies between the proletarian writers and the Fellow-Travellers really following them, and the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois reactionary literature; and their fight is for the reader, for social recognition, and for the wavering writers. Thus the worker-peasant-democratic-intellectual bloc is under the hegemony of the proletariat fighting; the bourgeoisie, the bourgeois intelligentsia, and the kulaks. The worker-peasant bloc is manifestly winning, and the hegemony of the proletariat inside is consolidating itself."

I am quoting a poem from 'Voks' by a famous poet just to give the readers an idea of the spirit of

present-day Russian literature.

Comrades It shall Not Be Allowed.

In voices shrill
    from anguish,
    In voices coarse and gruff,
Let all the world
    to-day
Assert its will
    And shout in unison:
                "Enough." !!!

We decline!
  we refuse!
    It shall not be allowed!
Nations
    have no enemy nations—
It's only a myth
    invented by war friends
    To fool the crowd.
Workers,
    Fight no nations but classes.
Toilers
    All over the world,
            Arise in your masses!

Proletarian forces
    in every country,
    Take arms but attack
All grasping, rapacious,
    the brutal, mendacious,
    Imperialist pack.

Peace is Utopia,
    an empty phrase
    That snares and fools
So long as greedy
    Capital rules.
To-day....
    To-morrow....

        We'll fight it out,
So let us brothers,
        Proclaim and shout:

Down with war
Of nation against nation!
We'll wage our class war—
A war against war,
A war for peace
and liberation!

Vladimir Mayakovsky
(Translated by Michael L. Korr.)

Formerly artists were looked down upon as the remnants of old bourgeoisie intellectuals. They could not express publicly their grievances against the State, as they were supposed to have no right in the State. But now the case is different—very different. Now like engineers and scientists artists are also greatly favoured and patronised by the State. While I was coming back to Berlin from Moscow I met a writer in the train who could speak a little English. From him I came to know that when one finishes a book he has to submit it to the State and if the State think it worth publishing the writer gets remuneration on the basis of a unit of forty thousand words. The drama writers get royalty from the theatres on each performance. Probably now the artists are the most happy in Russia. They are favoured by the State, honoured by the people—live better, eat better, have no anxiety about the sale of their books. For the new education and culture Russians are so mad of literature that the supply is insufficient to meet the demand. I was told Maxim Gorky is the richest writer in Russia.

VI

We walked down to Moscow station just in front of our hotel. My guide found out the reserved berth for me. In Russia even in the third class or "hard class" as it is said in Russia, sleeping berth is available by paying some extra for it. Mattress, pillows and clean bed-sheet can be had from the railway company by paying a little extra over the reservation fee. Probably throughout Europe this advantage is not allowed to the third class passengers except in Sweden. Each small compartment has four sleeeping benches, of which not all were reserved but occupied by several passengers together.

The guide making me comfortable at my berth bade good-bye. Shaking my hand she said "I shall never forget that parents choose and—"

I completed her sentence "we marry. But we are not unhappy for that at all. Are you all satisfied with your marriage system? If so, why are there so many divorces after choosing your own partners yourself?"

"That's life. Life is ever changing—that is the sign of life": exclaimed she. "But—" I had to stop, the guard blew the whistle.

I waved my hand and said: "forgive and forget if any thing I have said hurting you."

The kind host replied, " I shall ever remember you—"

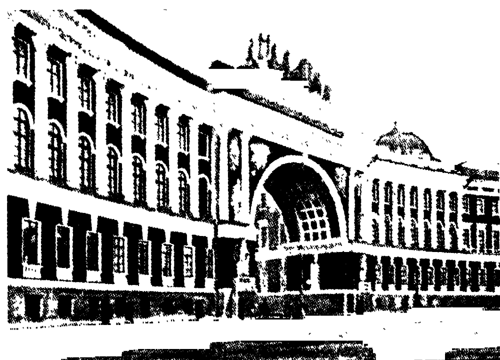
The train steamed off and I could not hear her as I was moving away from her.

The trains in Russia have double window glasses and steam heaters. Compartments were packed and crowded with labourers and peasants. How filthy their dresses, their habits; they spit on the floor and smear the same with their heavy boots. Their dresses speak that they have not seen what a laundry is during their life time. Men and women were travelling together side by side—none seemed to be awkward or paying any special respect or attention to the other. They are comrades, they have equal status in the eyes of the State and by this free mixing they claim to banish the sex mentality from both the sexes. But I doubt it—they are human beings with flesh and blood, nerves and glands; I do not understand how they can check the physiological function of human beings by free mixing—to me this may act on the contrary. Free mixing on equal status does this much that it removes the charm of the unknown and makes open every thing unveiling the mystery of the other sex and thereby certainly removes *undue* sex-mentality, but it cannot kill the eternal Adam and Eve living in every human being.

The guide warned me to keep keen watch on my



A painting of the 9th January revolution of 1905



Red Army Arch and the office of the Army
- Leningrad

luggages as most of the peasantry and labourers yet could not give up the evils of illiteracy and subjugation. So though I got a nice clean bed I could hardly sleep.

The train is one of the fastest in Russia. It covers 405 miles, the distance between Leningrad and Moscow, in 12 hours.

VII

In Moscow I got better reception. Soon after alighting I was asked by a young pretty girl if I am Mr. Baneryee, as they pronounce Banerjee. I nodded in the affirmative and was escorted to the hotel in a car. It was on the bank of Moscow or Moscava river and close by the famous Red Square and Kremlin. This hotel too was quite up-to-date and probably bigger than that of Leningrad.

I was given meal-tickets and taken to a comfortable room overlooking the river and Red Square. The guide asked me to have my lunch and get ready if I wished to see something on that day. I had a wash and went to the restaurant where I was glad to see the Australian gentleman whom I met in Leningrad. He seemed dejected and melancholy. I asked, "Where are your friends?"

—"Which friends?"—thundered he.

—"Who were with you in Leningrad."

—"We met each other in Russia and separated here; they are not my friends"—said he.

—"You seem thinner during these few days"—murmured I.

—"Yes, I am helpless, I am now worse than a beggar; my mental worry probably has made me thinner."

I was surprised to hear such words from him. I softly asked him, " Would you mind telling me what has happened? Have you been robbed or have you lost your money? "

" No my friend. I came here to seek some job. I am an engineer. There are so many foreign engineers in Russia and Russia still wants them—so I hoped to have some job "—he sipped from his cup and went on, " but Russians have made a new law that anybody willing to have any job in Russia must mention his desire in the application for passport, otherwise he will not be given any work. But I did not do it, as I was told that Russia was not employing any foreigners and also the visa for a job-seeker took much longer time to come from Moscow. I had not sufficient funds with me to wait so long, so I came with tourist's visa but now I see I have made the greatest blunder."

—" Did you go anywhere here for any job," —asked I.

—" Yes. I tried in Leningrad but was told that Moscow is a better field, so I have come here and I went to the authorities here. They gave me some hope but when they came to know that I held tourists' visa they denied me any chance. Now I have not sufficient money to go back. I have wired some of my friends in England for help, but they are just

friends," stopped he. His voice almost choked.

"Where is your family?" asked I.

—"They are in Australia. Poor fellows! I have four children, probably they are starving with their mother." Suddenly throwing the bitten bread into the dish he asked me, "Do you believe in God?"

I was trying to follow his line of thought but, without waiting for my answer, he shouted, "All bogus. I say there is no God—there can't be any. They say God is father of all, He is all loving but bare facts say He is not so, so there is no God and if there be any He is partial and sides with the capitalists, the exploiters."

Hesitatingly I said: "Our religion says every body suffers or enjoys according to his works of past life."

—"Past life? Nonsense. What is the use of whitewashing all the exploitations of the capitalists by all these unseen boguses—God, past life, fate, chance? They say God helps those who help themselves but look at me. I am a young man, quite healthy, willing to work, have education and brains, but for the conspiracy of the capitalists I must have to starve, I won't get any job." Excitedly he bit the bread, his lips were trembling with grief and anguish.

—"But Russia is a land of the proletariate. Why don't they give you any job?"

—"They have their laws and I have violated

them."

In a soft sympathetic tone I asked: "Can't you have any job at Australia—your motherland?"

"Motherland: Fie, that's all bluff. In all the countries be it dependent or free the cream is shared by the bourgeoisie and the proletariate get always the skimmed milk in their share and sometimes nothing."

I was silently sipping from my cup. Suddenly pointing his sinewy hands to a waiter he said: "Look at these happy faces. Their standard of living may be now not so high, yet they don't face starvation, the hungry pale faces of their families don't stare at them. The Russians know that they won't starve and that's the great achievement of the revolution. In our country, like all other capitalist countries, one may be earning quite handsome living but he is always afraid of his dismissal at the whims of capitalist masters and to face starvation."

"Here too there are dismissals and appointments, here too you must satisfy your superiors, otherwise—"

"Mr. Banneryee"—turning back I saw my guide accompanied by another lady.

"Are you ready?" asked the guide.

"Yes. Would you like to go to any place now?" said I.

" If you so please. Here is your new guide, she will show you everything and I must bid goodbye to you "—added she.

Really this was disappointing. By my good luck I always had pretty young intelligent guides to receive me, but my ill star always replaced them by others who though not bad yet were not so charming. This new guide was quite young, completing her twentyfirst year, had a slim figure, could speak quite good English and had quite visible gray moustaches—a phenomenon not very uncommon in Europe.

We went to see Lenin's Mausoleum on the Red Square near the Kremlin.

Crossing the bridge of Moscava we went to the Red Square—the square which justifies its name, having been smeared with blood during the great revolution of 1917. The walls of the Kremlin borders the square in one side, on the other sides are the St. Basil Cathedral, now anti-religious museum, historical museum and some other buildings. In the Kremlin is the famous bell of Moscow. The Kremlin appears to be a fort, from its minarets shooting above and high compound wall, which makes it mysterious. Formerly the Kremlin was open to the visitors but when I was there it was forbidden. Behind the walls of this Kremlin, the strings of the Bolshevik Government are pulled by the dictators.

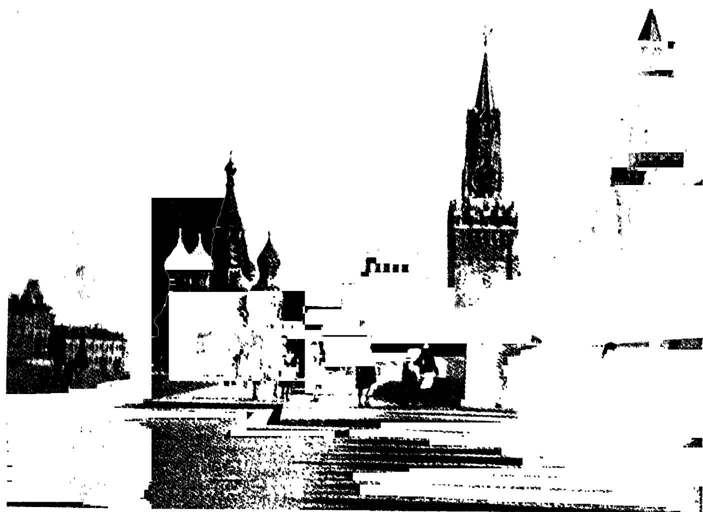
Beside the wall of the Kremlin is the mausoleum of Lenin. The mausoleum is of fine precious stone but void of any gorgeousness and any aristocratic complicacy in style. There was not a single big arch or fine carving: only clean glazed stones have been placed one upon another, somewhat after the fashion of a pyramid. Two military guards guard the entrance, a small doorway, just like statues.

People throng there daily and wait in queues amidst the snow until the prescribed hour. When the door is opened they rush in, to see their Saviour, their Prophet. Bags, sticks or anything else except clothing is to be deposited outside.

I was carried away along in the current of the crowd and went into the Mausoleum. Passing the door we turned left and descended down. It was a little dark; turning two more corners we came to the lower flat where the dead body of Lenin has been preserved in a glass-case. A soldier was standing near by and was not allowing anybody to stand still near the case. We just walked around three sides of the case anxiously looking at the great genius and were forced to go out by another door by the pressure of the crowd behind. Inspite of all these crowds there was no noise, no hum and mumble. Everybody adopted himself to the grave atmosphere of the place. I had seen the photograph of Lenin but never hoped to see him in flesh and bone

in my life, as his life had expired long ago. But through the grace of science I did see what seemed once impossible. Still the french-cut beard adorns his face, bald head and wide forehead. He has got wrinkles on them even now—probably because of his serious thinking. His eyes were shut. Seeing this dead body one of the friends of Mr. B. Shaw said, "Look at those aristocratic hands." Mr. Shaw replied, "They have not worked for long." It seemed the great lion was sleeping; soon after he would get up we would see the short slim fiery orator addressing some meeting in the Red Square, putting his hands inside the pockets of his trousers, with his thundering voice. But alas! the body was there—none knows where is the life. Was it known or could it be known, probably all the Russians would not keep any stone unturned in this earth to find it and place it in the cover of flesh and bone, which they have preserved so carefully as a national treasure.

My guide took her hand-bag and we proceeded towards a law court to see some trial. As there was not sufficient time in hand we were walking a bit fast; but this made more delay. I was not accustomed to walk on the hard pressed slippery snow on the road. So trying to walk fast I embraced the snow and the ground creating a scene. The more I tried to get up the more I slipped, thus amusing the passers by; my guide came



Red Square with St. Basil Church and Lenin's Mausoleum beside the Kremlin

to my rescue and with her help I saved further scene.

VIII

We went to the court; it was not a gorgeous building, no well-dressed orderlies were seen. We took our seat in one of the court rooms. There were no pleaders or attorneys with their unique dresses having big pockets. One could mistake it as a class room or a meeting hall. The Judge and two co-judges, one of whom was a lady, sat on a dais having a naked table before them; the public and trial seekers sat on benches just before the judges, only a wooden bar lay between. The Judges had very simple dresses, one could easily mistake them as ordinary workers from their simple clothings, short clipped hair, sunburnt muscular face and sinewy strong hands. So far as I can remember, the lady judge had a kerchief on her head.

A woman was leaning on the bar excitedly, saying something, moving her hands in different directions, sometimes weeping, soon after bursting into a cry.

I asked my guide what was the case. She heard it for some time and said: "She has sued for the maintenance of her child against her husband and probably the man whom she alleged as her husband denies his fatherhood."

Really it was an interesting case for me to see. These suits are the outcome of the new idea of Bolshevik society. As a result of abolishing all

marriage institutions and giving full sexual freedom these complicated unique cases are making their appearance.

The husband was called upon to show cause why he should not bear the maintenance. He denied flatly his fatherhood and alleged that the woman cohabited with some other young men too and the child is born by some one else. Proof was taken—the alleged co-habitors were examined, evidence was recorded and then the court took up another case. I was told the judgment will be delivered later after consultation.

In this case too the plaintiff was a woman. She claimed that when she was divorced she got a decree entitling her to have one-third of the earnings of her husband, now her husband's salary has been considerably increased but he is giving her only one-third of his previous salary—she prayed for one-third of her husband's present income. This case took about fifteen minutes for hearing and the court rose to consult.

One of the judges called my guide and asked her to take me to the consultation chamber which was beside the court room.

I went in; the room was a small one; a lady secretary was sitting there with books and papers on the table. The judges asked me through my guide what I thought of the court, and if I had any questions to

ask. I enquired, "How do you charge the court fees?"

"There is no court fee at all," said my guide, "the court is kept by the Government for justice and the poorest must get the advantage of the justice of the court, why should we bar the poor from getting the advantage of fair trials by levying high court fees?"

The argument was convincing and justified. I asked next, "Have you any separate criminal court."

"No, all the trials are held in one court."

"I hope, people can appeal against your orders."

"Yes, surely. They can go to the appellate court"—was the answer.

"May I know the constitution of your judiciary department?" asked I. This time the guide held a bit longer conversation with the judges and replied: "The lowest court is the People's court, which has a substantial but limited jurisdiction. Against the decision of these courts appeals can be made to Provincial or Regional Courts. These courts, apart from their appellate side, have the power to supervise the operations of all the judicial institutions in the Province or Region and decide in their general meeting the points of law in intricate cases referred to them by judges of People's courts." This was interesting. I asked "Have you not references of previous case-laws? Why do the judges of lower courts refer intricate points to the

Provincial court, can't they themselves decide them on case-laws? " " No," said she emphatically, " we have no case-laws. We have done away with those as they hinder to a great extent the clear common sense of the judges."

" Well, let us proceed with the constitution "—said I.

Above the Provincial courts are the supreme courts of R. S. F. S. R. or of the other republics under whose juridictions they fall."

—Is each republic independent of each other ?

—Yes all the seven republics* both judicially and executively. Only they are all under the Supreme Court and Military Court of the USSR. and the Gaypayoo—.

" Oh ! that terrible G.P.U., of which we have heard so much "—exclaimed I.

Smilingly she said, " How do you know it is terrible ? "

" Yes it is so. I have read in many books about it. Don't you think it terrible ? " asked I.

" Yes it is if you are against the State policy, otherwise not," said she.

" Then it is a fact that by all means you are

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*(1) The Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic; (2) The Ukranian Socialist Soviet Republic; (3) The Transcaucasian Socialist Soviet Republic; (6) The Turkmenistan Socialist Soviet Republic; (7) The Tadrikistan Socialist Soviet Republic.

choking public opinion.—"

" How? " asked she; " only we don's allow the anti-socialist to create agitation or conspire against the state. There are many, you know, inside and outside the USSR., who always try to destroy this state of the Proletariate."

"—Then how did you find the Tsarist regime guilty of oppressing the revolutionists. What is the difference between Soviet and Tsar regimes? Both suppress the criticising public voice and how do you advocate personal freedom ? "

This slash evidently excited her; her fair rosy cheeck flashed red, eyes became bigger and glittering. She said, " But now the proletariate, the masses have their voice, the bourgeoisie, the enemy of the Proletariate state are choked but that does not matter. They have said enough—now they must stop."

—" Well, probably we are wasting the valuable time of the judges; let us finish our subject. Yes, how do the Supreme Courts of the republics and that of the USSR. and Military Court function? " was my question.

—" The Supreme Courts of the republics have three functions—appellate or cassational, original and interpretative. Appeals are made against the decision of Provincial Courts and the decision of the Supreme Court is final unless the president of the Supreme Court

objects to it when the case is placed before the 'Plenum' or general meeting of the court. But generally the litigants can't appeal to this court, only if the Supreme Court so desires or the procurator of the republic refers, this court can revise the cases and set aside the decisions of Provincial Courts. In the original side only specific persons such as procurators, judges of Supreme Court, are tried. In the interpretative jurisdiction it interprets finally all points of law and procedure in the republic. This is the constitution of the Supreme Court of the republics. The Supreme Court of USSR. has also the above functions. It can review the judgements of Supreme Courts of the seven republics. It settles the disputes between constituent republics and tries persons of very high position. In its *plenum* it can exercise some power on the decisions and decrees of the Central Executive Committees of the republics. The Military Court deals with members of Red Army." She took a breath after this long talk. Giving her a few minutes rest I asked, "what are the Central Executive Committees ?"

"Oh ! that is the committee which has direct executive and legislative power over the states.—"

"What is the salary of the judges ? Do they get better remuneration than the labourers ?" enquired I.

Pointing to the judges the guide said, "He is a

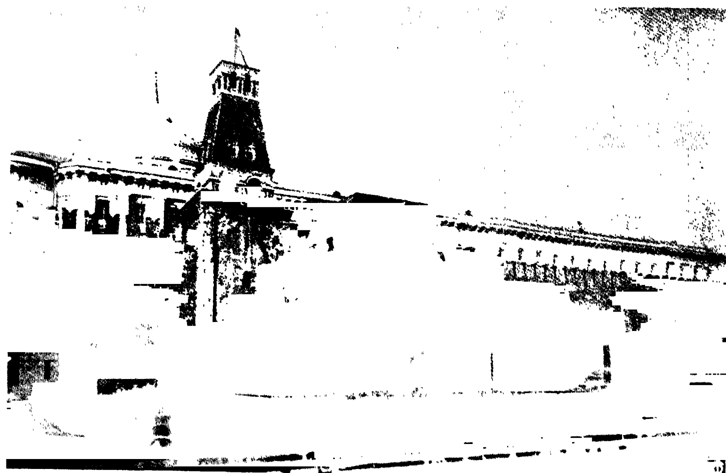
proletariate. He worked in the factory and as he showed keen common sense, he was trained as a Judge, read some laws and they (pointing to the co-judges) still work in the factory. For six days in a year they have been elected as judges and they will again go back to the factory or farm. If they can show satisfactory sense of judgement they may be taken for training as judges. They get the same salary as that of a skilled factory labourer. Outside the court they have no special distinction as judges and will freely mix with other labourers, if they don't, if they have bourgeois mentality, they will be again sent back to the soot or soil." My next question was, "Have you any Law book which guides you or common sense is the final authority?"

The guide after consulting with the judges said, "No, they have Law books" and showing me some books on the table continued, "but by common sense every thing is judged and punishment is given according to law."

"Do you find lady judges as efficient as male judges," asked I. My guide this time without holding any consultation with the judges said, "Why should they not be? Have they not the brain, intelligence and common sense?" She said this smilingly but behind this smile I could perceive the heat of wounded self-respect. I turned my point and said, "For how many years the permanent judges are elected?"



A batch of happy "Pioneers"



Lenin's Mausoleum in the Red Square Moscow

—" They are elected for one year by the Provincial Executive Committee but generally they are re-elected? "

"—Have they any special course to read ? "

" —Yes, we have Institute of Soviet Law where besides Law, Political Economy, Psychology, Sociology, etc., are taught."

" But the co-judges don't seem to have the course as they have to work in the factories."

" No, they don't have. It is the duty of the Permament judge to explain to them the procedure and law and often lectures on law are arranged for them."

" Then probably the co-judges have no voice in the judgement," enquired I.

" Why not? " exclaimed she. " If the co-judges disagree with the judge, their decision will be final as they are the majority."

I murmured, " But they are lay."

" It does not matter," smilingly said she; " they have common sense and that carries more weight than the technicalities of law."

Then I asked, " I have not seen any advocate or pleader in the court. Haven't you any of them? "

After consultation she said, " Yes, we have advocates but generally in simple cases we don't engage them. Our law does not make the appointment of pleaders compulsory. We can plead ourselves, can

see the records, copy them or can say whatever and whenever we like regarding the case. So what's the use of wasting money by appointing advocates.

I asked in surprise, "Waste of money? Do your advocates get fees?"

"Yes they do and according to their merit."

I smiled. The guide was intelligent enough to understand the meaning of the smile. So she said, "but don't think there is any great difference in the fee of one with that of the other. There is also no fixed fee for any particular pleader. The litigant has to pay fee according to his income and the fees are collected in the 'Collegium' or the Association of the advocates, from where each advocate is paid a monthly salary according to his merit".

"Then the poorest worker can't have any advocate."

"Why not?" asked she.

"Suppose he or she earns only a bare living and can't spare anything for advocate's fee?"

"They only need apply to the 'Consultation Bureau' and if found unable to pay fees, will be helped free."

"Your Judicial Department seems to be interwoven with the Executive."

"Yes, but what harm is there?"

"Please ask your judges if there is any harm

in this system or not?" was my reply.

She asked and the judges laughed, shaking their heads and told her something. She interpreted, "Even the countries which advocate the separate existence of Judicial and Executive function of the Government, practice themselves quite the contrary. Theoretically it may be a pleasant thing to dream but practically there can be none. They are hypocrites, so they don't confess their failure, if you see any of the political trials of any country of the world you will realise it. We are not hypocrites."

I had already absorbed much of their valuable time and I thought it a sin to keep the anxious accused outside the consultation room waiting and waste the time of the judges any more for my curiosity's sake, so I thanked them heartily, shook hands and came out.

After a few minutes, the judges came out and the permanent judge delivered the judgement. In the first case all the cohabitors were asked to pay maintenance of the child as it was difficult to ascertain exactly by whom it was born and in the second case one-third of the present income of the husband was granted to the wife.

I was overwhelmed with the extraordinary simplicity of Russian court. How free the accused were! Bail is easily granted, accused charged under an offence which does not provide for at least one year's imprison-

ment, cannot be held in custody. Fair trial is always expected as everybody can go to a higher court without expense. Moreover the judges are elected from the masses who know the circumstances, mentality, customs, woes and worries of the accused whom they are trying. So, by every probability, there is chance for more sympathetic trial than the trials of capitalist countries, where the judges form a special sect of the society, the 'privileged classes,' as termed by the Russians, who often being ignorant of the life and circumstances of the masses often blindly deal heavy blows on their lives and properties. Besides this, the judges in other countries keep themselves secluded from the ordinary people by all means; their gorgeousness, gravity and position make the litigants look at them with an air of superiority for which they often do not venture to have their say freely. So this simplicity of Russian Courts at any rate is a great advantage to the litigant public.

It was time for our tea, so we went back to the hotel. The cold was extremely severe in the afternoon. Snow was incessantly falling around us—we were walking on snow. It attacked us from all sides, up and down. Cold was penetrating through the stockings and shoes, the icy air taken in was about to freeze the heart and stop its function. But I do not think that the Russians are hardier people than we are though they

are brought up in the severe atmosphere from their very birth; it is their warm fur dresess which enable them to stand the severity of the climate. In the 'Creches' in Leningrad I saw how children were carefully wrapped in quilt and skin—one dress would suffice to choke any of our children here. The adults wear dresses though clumsy and dirty yet quite warm—the poor have the sheepskin and the skilled labourers who are now the 'privileged classes,' have warm fur coats or woollen jackets. I think, with a Russian dress, with their fabulously warm caps, any man from the tropics can withstand the cold of Russia: only the bare face would experience some unpleasant sensation the icy wind.

My guide departed with the promise of coming back after evening to go to a "Peasants' Home". There are, I was told, "Peasants' Club," "Home of Culture," "Park of Recreation," "Park of Rest and Culture" and such other institutions where workers and peasants can enjoy their evenings profitably by reading, lecturing, playing or attending to theatrical or cinema performances. I was also told that during the severe winter the Park of Culture and other outdoor institutions were closed so we decided to go to the Peasants' Home.

The tea and food were as bad as those of Leningrad. The prices are so exorbitant that

it is almost impossible for foreigners to buy anything extra in the hotels. I remember I had to pay ten shillings (worth about Rs. 6|8|-) for one apple and the other day £1|- (worth about Rs. 13|5|-) for one dish of roast fowl. So I thought it better to practice fasting rather than filling the poor stomach with such precious apples or fowl. Once I told my guide that it was impossible for any proletariate to come to see her country; her reply was, " We never request them to come. When they come they must pay for it." A straightforward reply indeed: She added, " You know we are in need of foreign money, dollars or pounds, and we must have it as much as possible from the foreigners and we know that they can pay it ". The statement was illuminating—I could understand the peculiar law of Soviet Russia of not refunding the foreign money once exchanged with roubles. But later I came to know that things can be had a bit cheaper at Torgsin, the store for foreigners with which I shall deal in due course.

It was dark when my guide came. We crossed the Moscow river and stood waiting beside the walls of the Kremlin. Tram after tram came and passed but there was no sign of our tram to come. We walked and kept ourselves moving. There were no buses or any other public vehicles—only very recently operations have begun for laying underground electrical

trains. The tram came, we jammed ourselves in the crowd, which was rather pleasant then but for the fowl smell of the dirty dresses and respiration.

IX

My guide was asking every now and then the passengers who were fortunate enough to procure a seat beside the windows, to which place we had come, because it was impossible to know as all the window-glasses were besmeared with hard frozen snow from both in and outside, and the front view was blocked by the standing crowd. All the passengers must board the car through the back-door; only ladies with young babies and old folks are allowed to enter the car by the front-door beside the driver, which is generally used for alighting.

The Peasant's Home was a big building. My guide did not seem to know it before. She first led me to the dining hall of the peasants where there were several peasants with their bags and baggages who had just arrived there from their village homes. We were given the right direction as to how to go to the Superintendent of the house and we found him out.

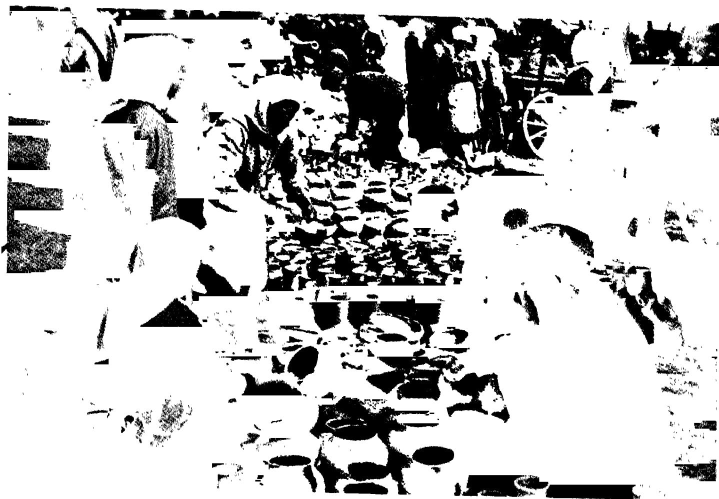
He was a lawyer and was in charge of the Home. He could not speak English, so both of us used the guide as our interpreter.

I told the guide, "Please ask the gentleman whether I can put any questions to him."

"Surely you can," said she smilingly. "But please shorten your questions, otherwise we will be too late



The House of Trade-Unions.



A Kolkhoz market

to be back. Hu! what a question-asker you are!"

"You see, it is not possible for a foreigner to see Russia within such a limited time—even not in months together, so the only way we can know something about Russia is to put questions to your departmental heads and then to verify them as far as possible," was my answer.

"Well, go on," said she.

"May I know what are your Colhozes and Sovhozes? Some foreign books use them in the same sense".

"No, they are not the same. Colhozes are big collective farms formed by the co-operation of the peasants and Sovhozes are big farms owned by the State."

"What is the system of the management and work of these farms?"

"In Colhozes the farmers join together, give all their lands, implements, livesticks and labour and share the profit equally irrespective of their amount of land or labour."

"So now that the peasants get profit they surely can accumulate wealth if they like."

"You naughty fellow, you always try to hit on the same point," accused she.

"Because you claim your fundamental difference there and only for your communistic theory people of

the world gaze at you. We must know how your wealth is distributed "—said I.

"Well, formerly running after its ideal the State gave the peasants only bare living and the rest was collected by the State. But at this the peasants grew furious as sometimes the officers on whom the task of ascertaining the household expenses of the peasants rested, underestimated the consumption and so the peasants sometimes had to starve. During that period they being angry with the State grew as little as possible to teach a lesson to the State and slaughtered almost all the livestock. As a result of this country-wide silent revolution there was famine. To prevent this Lenin introduced the 'NEP' (New Economic Policy) about which you probably know. But that had to be changed later when the Five-Year Plan was introduced. Now the State is trying its best to collectivise all the small peasants and to form big Colhozes which the Government is supporting by lending tractors, combines, selected seeds, best manure and other necessary things."

"What measures is the Government taking to uproot the individual farming?"

"Oh what a shrewd man you are, you always try to learn from me anything against our State."

I burst into laughter seeing the posture of her face at that time and said, "No, no, don't take my

questions in that light. I asked it sincerely."

"Yes I know it" winked the pretty companion.

"The State takes no coercive measures to uproot individual farmers but it only carries on propaganda showing the advantages of collective farms and the better returns. Now the percentage of collective farms is increasing very rapidly" added she.

"What are the special advantages of Colhozes"?

"The Colhozes get tractors and other machineries at a cheaper rate, selected seeds are distributed to them first, they have common dining halls, clubs, radio, cinemas, schools, libraries, hospitals, baths and all the advantages that a factory labourer gets. They produce more by pooling all their means together, so they get a better return."

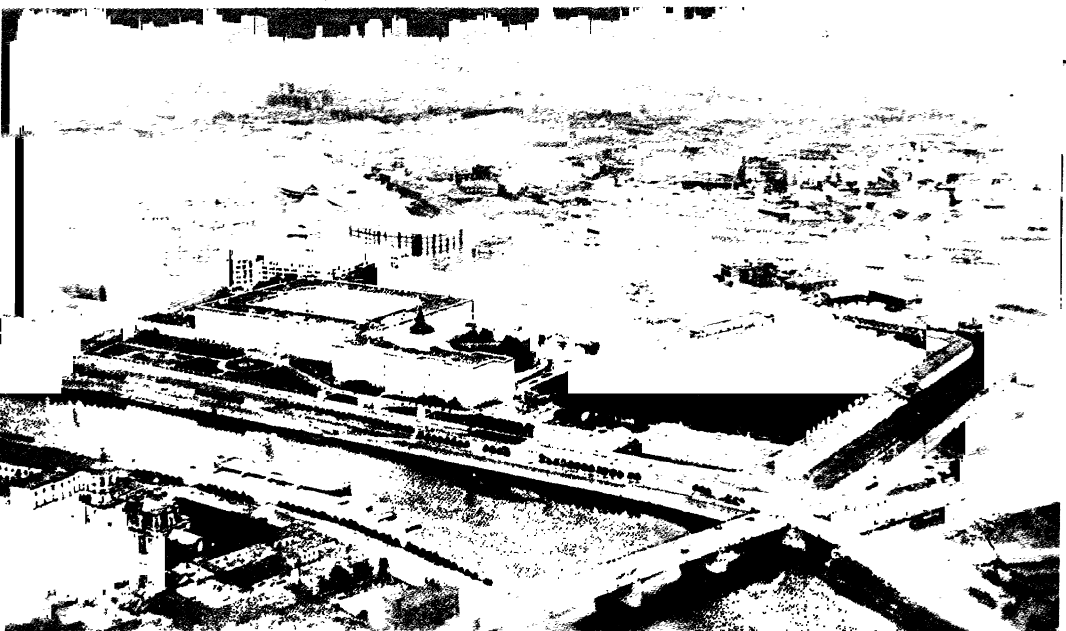
"But those who have bigger land area, I mean the big farmers who just own lands but do not work themselves, would not like to join these collective farms as probably they won't get better return and they will lose their mastery over the land and become ordinary labourers."

"Oh you mean the 'Kulaks,' we never care for them, we want to crush them, they are bourgeoisie"— With a little break she said, "Well I am afraid we are getting late. The Home will be closed soon so we must see it now."

We got up and went around the Museum hall with

big maps and charts, showing the growth of collective farms, the area under different crops, the density of population and various other things, hanging around. The hall was full of models of better cowsheds, silos, peasants' houses, methods of preserving seeds and various other things. In glass cases different species of rice, tea, cotton, wheat, sun-flower, potato, cucumber and other newly introduced or improved agricultural products were exhibited. The demonstrator there explained to batches of visitors with the help of the maps and charts how the collective farming has increased and what provinces will soon take it up and narrated the undreamt of advantages and pleasures that they will enjoy if they join the "Colhozes."

The Five-Year Plan proposed that by the end of the quinquennial year the Kulak and landed aristocracy should be swept away from the country and 20 per cent. of the peasantry should be collectivised. In 1930 actually 22.4 per cent. and in 1931, 62.2 per cent. and in January, 1932, 62½ per cent. of the peasants have been collectivised. Official figures show by 1933 only 20 per cent. of the land is now under individual farmers. According to the Plan the area to be sown in 1933 was proposed to be 141 million hectares (1 hectares—about 3 acres), but during 1931 actually 137.5 million hectares have been put into cultivation. The State increased the capital investment from 3,600



The Palace of Labour and the Yauza-bridge - Moscow

million roubles in 1931 to 4,300 million roubles in 1932, thus exceeding the original estimate by 50 per cent. The collective and state farms have absorbed 2.5 million skilled labourers of the country. In 1931, the Colhozes and Sovhozes produced 13 per cent. of the gross output of wool, 15 per cent. of milk, 20 per cent. of meat. Next I was taken to an underground hall, full of implements, tractors, ploughs, driller, sower, big combines, etc. They were minutely shown there. There hang the mottos and schemes of the Five-Year Plan regarding agriculture. It is interesting to note that the percentage of collectivisation has considerably increased where there had been tractor stations and this has led the State to increase the number of tractor stations. In 1930 only 260 tractor stations worked, during the spring of 1931 nearly 1,100 stations started work, by the autumn of the same year 1,400 stations began to function. During 1932 another 1,700 stations were to be started making a grand total of 3,100 in all. At least 200 hectares of land are alloted to each tractor to give them full work. The State calculates that at least 900,000 tractors are necessary for ploughing the arable land of the country and 100,000 tractors to be kept ready as reserve for breakage and stoppage. To fulfil this desire the USSR has completed tractor factories at Stalingrad, and Kharkov in 1931 with an annual output of 50,000 tractors each,

and also a factory at Chelyabinsk in 1932 with the same capacity. The Putilov works at Leningrad have also produced 40,000 tractors by January 1932. Several other factories were under construction and probably have been put into being by now.* It was an impressive Home—these demonstrations and the Official Statistics of tractor manufacturing, growing percentage of Colhozes say to the foreigners that agriculture in Russia is improving and is rapidly industrialized. But it is difficult for a foreigner to ascertain the actual condition there. The standard and scarcity of food stuff, lead one to think that Russia though essentially an agricultural country is still in need of agricultural products. I was told that as they have to buy machineries from foreign lands by selling their food-stuff they were unable to supply the nation with full ration.

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*For greater details of Russian Agriculture please see the author's *Modern Agriculture*—Chakraverty Chatterjee & Co., 15, College Street, Calcutta.

X

I came back to the hotel at about 9 P.M. quite a late hour in Russia in winter. I went straight to the dining hall and saw the Australian gentleman at his dinner. I took a chair beside him and asked, " Have you received any money or wire from your friends? "

" No," said he. " I expect the help at Leningrad. I have given Leningrad's address as I am leaving Moscow tomorrow morning."

" Where will you stay there? The hotels won't allow you to stay without money."

He thought a while and answered, " I shall seek the help of the guide there. I have got her address. She is a nice chap."

" Yes, she is very humorous too," said I and narrated the story of her cornering me in the marriage registration office.

He was about to jump up; " Is it so? I must go to her. Won't she marry me?"

I was surprised to hear such a proposal. Is he mad with his grief?—or, probably extreme despair has led him to this childish thought, which has blunted all the common sense and intelligence of this engineer?

I hesitatingly told him, " But you are married."

" Put all those laws of religion in the waste-paper basket. I don't believe in such religion as

can't feed me. I have stuck to religion so far, but what has it done for me? I could not procure food for myself or for my family. If she marries me I can get a job here and then from the salary I shall send something to my wife. I love her and the babies"— His eyes glittered as he suppressed his tears.

The waiter came to me for the meal-ticket. The gentleman told the waiter, "Can you please give me some bread instead of this beef roast?"

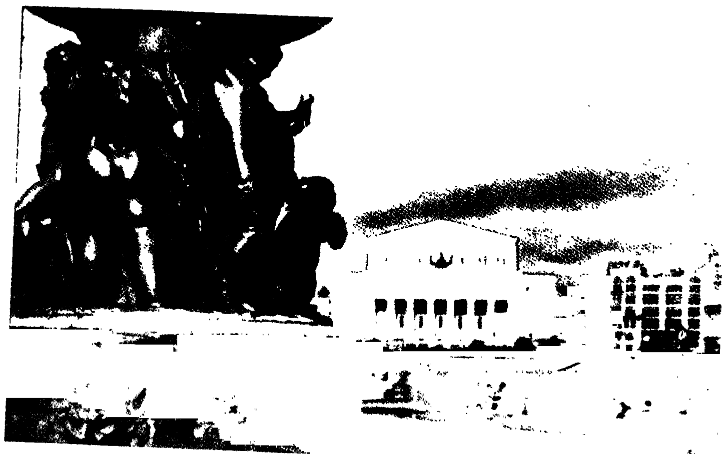
"Why Sir?"—The waiter looked at him with his big eyes to hear such an absurd proposal; bread for beef!

"I want it, you know, for tomorrow's meal. I know that beef roast will be a better dish for me to-night but then I must fast tomorrow. I want some bread for tomorrow."

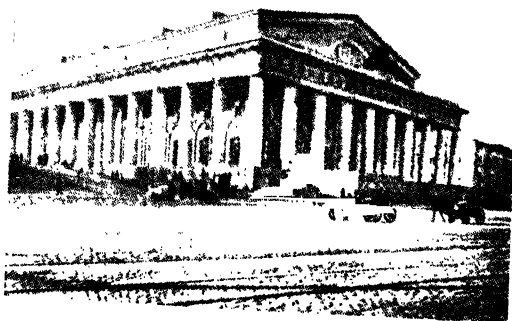
Really I was surprised to see how a man looses all his self-respect and self-restraint when he fears starvation. There was no reason to explain his poverty to the waiter; he could just demand the bread in exchange of his beef but probably psychology tells a different story.

The waiter took away the beef and gave only two pieces of black bread in its stead; with a piece of paper he wrapped all the bread of his dinner very carefully and put them in his pocket.

Seeing the gentleman's plight I could hardly put



Another view of the Sverdlov Square—Mosco
in the front stands the Grand Theatre



Bureau of Labour
Formerly the Prison for Political Prisoners
—Leningrad

anything to my mouth. It was a sin to me to relish anything before this hungry prey of misfortune. Hesitatingly I requested him, " Can I give you my bread—I don't like it at all."

" Yours? No, you must be hungry after the day's tour."

" No, I am not hungry, moreover, I do not like these breads "—without any further talk I put them all in his hand.

" Thank you "—his voice choked.

That night though I could not have anything save a cup of tea yet mentally I was so happy and contented that the richest dish in the world could not give me such pleasure.

XI

Next morning in the dining hall I met the guide. She informed me that I had got a motor car that day to see the town as there were two more German gentlemen who would accompany me. We started at about half past eight. Last night snow fell incessantly. All the parks, roads and the water of Moscava were covered with thick snow. The spring beauty of the town was sucked by the severe winter. But amidst the snow-covered parks many people were seen sitting and enjoying the morning breeze, many children were playing on the snow. While travelling in Finland I was told by a gentleman of the country, whom I met in the train, that in severe winter it is pleasant to cover oneself with snow and lie in the fields. I was given the reason that snow is non-conductor so if anybody covering his body with skin-coat or thick woolen dress buries himself in the snow only keeping the face outside, the extreme cold of the winter cannot penetrate the snow and this keeps him warm.

We were taken round the famous China Wall of Moscow, House of Trade Unions, the palace of Labour, House of Foreign affairs, House of Government. China Wall is the old fortification wall of the city. The Government houses were all massive and clean.

Our car drove through the Soviet Square on which

stood the Lenin Institute and Obelisk of Freedom, then we passed the museum of the revolution, big buildings of Izvesta and other newspapers, House of Electric Supply, the famous Academical Art Theatre, Grand Theatre and other important and interesting buildings.

The streets were undulating, the city seemed to be hilly. Most of the streets are cobbled. The police with their long grey coat but devoid of continental gorgeousness, control the traffic. The sight of women-police in a Moscow Street is not very uncommon.

The car stopped at Pushkin Square (formerly Strastnoi Square) before a Church, now like most of the other churches, converted into an anti-religious museum. We had to wait a few minutes outside the door of the museum, for which I could not get satisfactory explanation; probably the woman-in-charge had gone to some other place. On her arrival she opened the door and took us around the museum. I never expected such a dirty woman to be in charge of a museum. Her dresses smelt foul, her hair, teeth and eyes all said unanimously that she never had taken a bath nor any wash; her very appearance was repulsive. I could not bear her presence. So I left the party and asked my guide to explain the subjects. The museum is not a very big one but some of the collections were precious.

The evolution theory has been explained in models and pictures to convince the ignorant mass that all the creations of the earth and the earth itself have developed out of their own accord and there is no God or Creator. This argument, however, will not bear the scrutiny and reasoning of any sober and intelligent man. As in pre-revolutionary days the Russian church befooled the meek 'Mujiks' (Peasants) by demanding from them their money, cereals, and vegetables giving false hope of God's blessings and assuring them good harvest for the next year, cure of their relatives from diseases, begetting of children and so on; so the present anti-religious State is equally making fools of them by putting before them unsound reasonings and wrong philosophy about life and nature. They are equally guilty before the altar of truth and justice.

We came to that part of the museum where things which were regarded sacred before and were believed by the ordinary masses as impossible to touch or criticize, were placed. The ikons, the gold-bound sacred Bible, the crosses, before which thousands of the people prayed with bent knees, and on which they placed all their faith blindly in cases of difficulty and danger, to which they prayed for their happiness in Heaven and Earth, confessed all their faults with the blind belief that they will be pardoned by God, are now placed before them

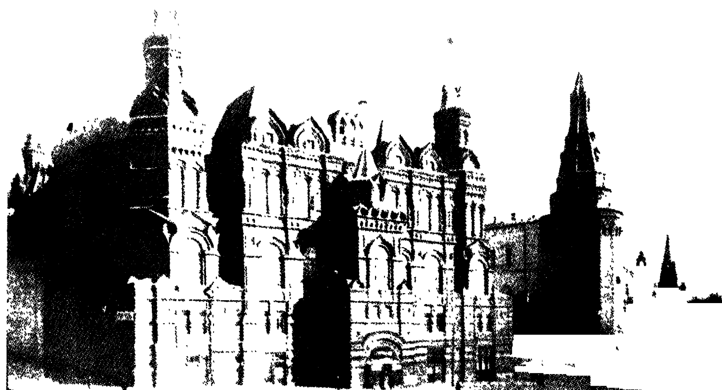
as exhibits. Now they can touch them, they can discuss about their frailty, they attribute to them no more importance than an ordinary historical exhibit but no thunder dooms them to death, epidemics do not wipe out their family, their hands and lips do not wither and fall, so the peasants are convinced that those whom they worshipped so long as almighty, are all bogus, lifeless, powerless, they have not the power to protect themselves from insult, so how can they save others? Gone are the glory of God, the charm of gorgeously-dressed clergymen, who were thought to be the living representatives of the almighty God, gone the sanctity of the ikons and the Bible. Spurred by their new anti-religious idea the peasants used the pages of the Bible as cigarette papers, burnt all the ikons and crosses in bonfire and even pulled out the tombstones and used them as stairstones.

Though the Bolshevist, I believe, cannot overthrow the reasoning and philosophy of the Hindu religion, yet it must be admitted that to a great extent they have been able to place evidence and reasoning against the Christian religion and that is a great thing. They have proved that many of the ideas preached by the holy book of the Bible, which is taken to be the backbone of the Christian religion, are wrong, e.g., the movement of the Sun round the Earth, the creation of the earth about which

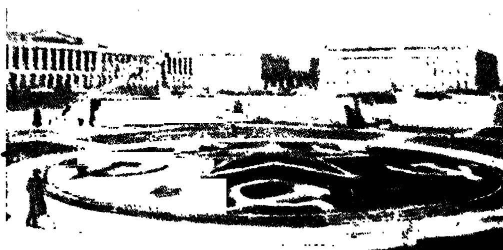
science speaks differently from the Bible and the creation of classes by God, which they use as their main evidence to prove that religion is created by a sect of upper class people, who want to keep some sect of the society under their eternal subjugation. They have illustrated in pictures the ideas and theories of the Bible and shown side by side what modern science says about them. They have produced many original letters and other evidences which prove that the Bishops and Clergymen always sided with the Tsar against the interest of the people. There are proofs which say that whenever there was any probability of political mass upheaval the Bishops used to declare some religious festival in consultation with the Tsar to divert the attention of the religious-minded peasantry. Surely these are sufficient to enrage the ordinary masses of the country, who placed all their faith blindly in their weal and woe on the religious fathers, whom they always believed to be their well-wishers. Moreover, when they are shown how befooled they were by the clever clergymen and how they were exploited in the name of religion by the lazy hypocritical clergy, it is very natural for them to revolt against them. The orthodox Church of Russia laid more stress on the formalities and festivities of religion and thus gave more prominence to the outward show of respect to the church and thus to the clergy. So when the peasants

revolted against them very naturally they shook off all other formalities of religion and thus religion itself. But there were another sect of the Christians —the Protestants, who, instead of outward formalities, engaged themselves in humane works for the society, such as establishment of hospitals, dispensaries, schools, libraries and thus created a real connection with the masses of the country. So the propaganda against the clergy could hardly affect this sect of the religion and the State too dared not choke it by force. On the contrary, this religion flourished during the first few years of the revolution as the social duties preached by Socialism almost coincide with those advocated by Protestantism, only they acknowledge the supreme power of the Almighty God, which was rather agreeable to the peasants who were born and brought up under the spell of religion from their very childhood. The Bolsheviks were alarmed by this popularity of the Protestants and in the April of 1929 passed a law forbidding any lecture supporting the religion and all religious institutions to exercise any influence on the society by philanthropic works and strictly restricting their activity in their own sphere. The law now forbids any religious education by any public body to the youth under eighteen. Of course, anybody above that age can read or profess any religion to which the State has no objection. It is said by the foreigners

that all the churches of Russia have been demolished and the authorities in Russia treat the religious men as enemies and the terrible G. P. U. always follow them like a shadow. But I cannot wholly agree with the statement, which has its origin in the malicious propaganda by anti-socialists. On the Red Square, right before the Kremlin and beside the St. Basil Church, now anti-religious museum, I have seen a small church with my own eyes, where several old men and women were kneeling down and praying with the deepest faith in God, probably asking for the prevalence of good sense (*sumati*) among the Bolsheviks. Only now the churches do not enjoy any special favour from the State as they used to do in the Tsar's time, they are not rent free, rather taxed heavily. No church is broken without the consent of the people under its jurisdiction. Before demolishing or converting any church to any other institution, votes are taken and work is carried on according to the majority of votes. True it is that the State treats religion with utmost apathy but it does not exercise any direct force on the people to give it up. It carries on propaganda with all the resources in hand, *viz.*, newspaper, literature, radio, etc., against religion. Around the walls, there were posters and placards painting the clergy as enemies of the State, as for example, a ship represented the Socialist State and the clergy, capitalists, Kulaks, all



The Historical Museum—Mosc



Park of Victims of Revolution (Panti Palace)
—Leningrad

were represented as trying to wreck it.

When we came out, the guide of the museum requested my guide to ask my opinion about religion.

She asked " Do you believe in religion? "

—" Surely I do "—said I.

—" Do you? "—She stared at me for a while and then asked, " Why? "

—" Because you could not convince me why I should not "—confirmed I.

" Well, is it not sufficient for you? Knowing all these fallacies and trickeries of religion you still place your faith in it? "—interrogated she.

—" You could not establish anything against the religion itself, all your allegations are against the clergymen "—added I.

—" Why only again the clergy? Did you not see how the churches exploited the poor peasants in the name of religious festivals and formalities. You know the poor peasants who were generally religious-minded used to spend most of their earnings by travelling to religious places, taking utmost pains; the dead bodies of the Bishops were kept in dark underground rooms, where the peasants used to go and pray before the dead bodies, kissed their coffins and thought them to be the medium of God. After the revolution when these dead bodies were brought to light it was seen that most of the dead bodies were false and chemically imitated.

Haven't you seen a model of the same in the museum? "—

"Yes I did. But all these complaints are still against the clergy—where is your allegation against the religion?" She was surprised to hear me arguing in this way. To her the fault of the clergy and that of the religion is the same. I added again, "The religion wants you to be kind and generous to your neighbours, it commands you not to commit any sin—." Forcing me to stop in the midway she exclaimed, "Well what is sin? According to religion to live together without marrying in the church is a sin, on the other hand, to exploit others is not a sin, as they say it is intended by God."

That was a difficult question. It is really very difficult to demarkate where sin begins. What is sin to a Hindu is not so to a Mahomedan or a Christian. What is virtue to a Jew is vice to a Catholic.

"Every religion has some special formalities and rites: When religion grows old many traditions and formalities creep in with the time and usage and those surely need reform from time to time to make it adaptable to the age but for that you should not blame the fundamental principles of the religion," begged I.

"What are those you call fundamental principles?" asked she and without any break spoke on —"To love one's neighbour, to help him, to be kind

to others—you mean these?"

I nodded in the affirmative.

She enthusiastically exclaimed: "Then it is we the Russians, who are the most religious race on the face of the Earth. Your religion appeals to your good sentiment to help the poor, to share your friend's grief and joy, to be kind to the incapables of the society and so you establish schools, hospitals, asylums for the poor, you dig tanks and wells to increase the credit balance of your ledger in the Heavens but our religion does not merely appeal but forces us to do all these. You help the poor but we will keep none of us poor, we will all enjoy the same comfort and on equal footing. In our society none would humiliate himself by begging from others and none would wound other's self-respect by looking down from a higher level. We are all equal. We have no religious class distinction too. Jews stand now on the same footing as the Orthodox do. Now they can live in the cities, they are not hated at all. They can marry the Orthodox or Protestants. You understand me?"

I had to admit that that was really a great religion but to tease the young friend I questioned, "Then you profess some religion, then how do you claim yourself to be an Atheist?"

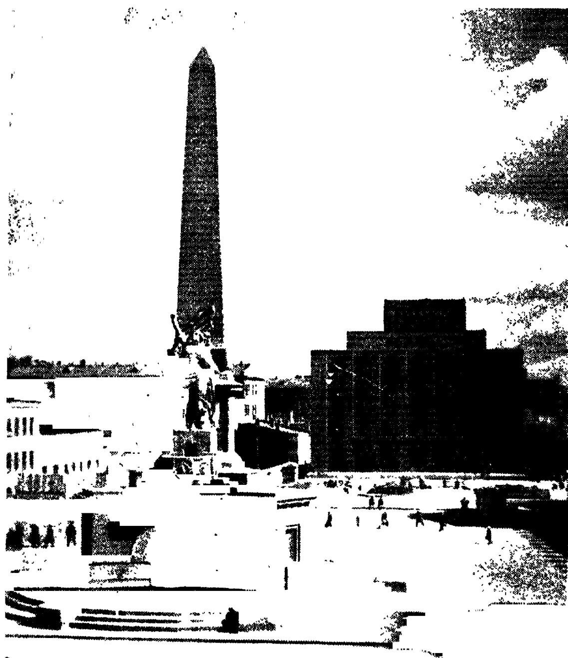
She objected fiercely, "No, we believe in no religion. We should have omitted that word from our

dictionary. We are communists."

—"Well that's your religion. Isn't it?" teased I again.

"Yes, that you can say"—smiled she.

We trampled down the fresh snow which pressed down like sugar and drove towards the workers' stadium. We left the city and came to its outskirt. Here the roads were not kept clean of fresh snow and the roads could hardly be distinguished from the fields around. The car jumped up and down and proceeded slowly. We were always fearing a sudden serious slip and this fear was not without ground. We saw a car on our way to slip from the road and dash straight against a big naked tree beside the road. The car was seriously damaged but fortunately the passengers were saved. The snow on the road was a bit brownish, being walked over and only for this the road could be recognized.



The Obelisk of Freedom and the Lenin Institute
in the Soviet Square Moscow

XII

We came to the stadium. Nature suddenly covered her bright glittering face with the veil of cloud and soon she began to shed tears of pearls. Our overcoat soon became whitewashed and some of us fell flat on the ground probably to have more pearls.

The stadium was a huge and new one. Here the workers come to see and join sports. As the State has made provisions for libraries, clubs, radios, Lenin's corner, parks of rest and culture for the cultural development of the workers so it also has made arrangements for the physical improvement of the people. Almost every club and factory has Gymnasiums and I was told in the summer and spring one can see physical feats in every park of the city. It is the desire of the Union (USSR.) to make all the workers and peasants, healthy and happy physically and mentally, to make them good citizens and in times of war good soldiers. Only very recently *Reuter* informed that Russia had been producing rifles in all factories and everybody was being taught to use them. They know that they are amidst the capitalist countries—in the east Japan and in the west Germany, England, Austria and all other countries, big or small, which are her bitterest enemies. Only very recently the present Government of Russia have been acknowledged by

America and some capitalist countries made treaties and pacts with it but even that does not wipe out their fear of capitalist invasion. They have pronounced in an unequivocal voice—times without number—that they are not aggressive, they do not want to attack others but they must be always prepared for foreign invasion which they expect any moment. The recent move of Japan on the Eastern Frontier of USSR. was a sufficient plea for USSR. to declare a war against her but the present dictators are too cautious to do anything in hot haste for the sake of prestige. But they cannot endure all these impertinences of Japan and they are consolidating the Eastern Frontier steadily and rapidly. The papers say that Russia has given special concessions to the peasants and soldiers who will settle on the Eastern Front which so long was thinly populated. New factories and farms are opened there to strengthen the position and to help all these preparations requires men physically and mentally strong and preferably skilled and cultured. So it is not merely a philanthropic idea which impels the State to elevate the status of the ordinary working class but it is essential for its very existence and in future for its extension.

As it was winter nothing was to be seen in the stadium but the buildings. The architecture was a modern one and simple but colossal.

XIII

We drove through the slum quarters. A few new big three-storied buildings were standing majestically with their bright colours, big windows, electric lights and heaters, sanitary and privy arrangements, amidst the low tottering wooden huts which were calmly awaiting their demolition very soon. Here we could see the difference in living arrangements of the workers of pre- and post-revolutionary days. The huts were two-storied with wooden props covered with mud walls. The two storeys would hardly reach the height of one storey of the modern buildings. They had a few very small windows through which probably the sun had no admission. The environs were still dirty—manure pits, ashes and wastes lying all around them. The State is gradually demolishing those huts and building new modern buildings in their stead. But the accommodation is still unsatisfactory. Generally 6 to 9 sq. metres (1sq. metre = 1.1|5 sq. yds.) is allotted per head and one has to pay exorbitantly high prices for any extra space occupied by him. In case of big families a special concession is allowed. Everybody, be he a party-member or not, factory labourer or office clerk, has to pay rent per square metre of floor area but I was told that for the same room and same space different rates are charged according to the scale of income

of the inhabitants. The situation of the building is another factor which controls the rent. There are some co-operative buildings which are built on co-operative basis taking loan from State Co-operative Bank or Municipal Housing fund. Generally, these co-operative houses are rent-free and the members are charged rent sufficient to maintain the building and to pay up the loans.

—" But 6 to 9 sq. metre floor area is not sufficient for a man to live comfortably "—commented I.

—" No, we admit that and that is why the State is building so many houses even knowing that haste and unskilled labour may result in poor quality "—said she.

—" But that's a wrong principle. You are merely wasting your money by building unsound houses and I am afraid the State also suffers some loss for waste of materials when the labourers are removed from one place to the other according to need as I have seen in Leningrad."—

—" Yes," murmured she. " But how to accommodate the workers is the first considerations. They are flowing into the city like a current. You know in 1926 Moscow had 2 million inhabitants and in 1931 the number increased to 2¾ millions. In Leningrad too the increase in population is about 38.1 per cent. when the figures of the same years are compared and we



have to accommodate this increased population"—explained she.

"What is the cause of such heavy rush of people who evidently come from the villages"—asked I.

—"Probably for the attraction of town life"—

—"But it existed even in Tsars' time, why did not the people come then in such a volume to enjoy the town life"?—questioned I.

"Then they had not the advantage to enjoy it so fully as they have now."—Said she.

"Excuse me, I think there is something more in it," continued I. "Your factory labourers are surely better looked after by the State which is in the hands of that class and the reason for my thinking so is your forcible collection of grains from the peasants in the pre-Five-Year Plan period for your factory labourers and the extra attention of the State to the factory districts."

"Well, we want to industrialise the country, so we can't but give more stress on factories," said she.

"But I am afraid, led by your extraordinary zeal for the welfare of factory hands, you have overlooked the peasants and that has made them to come to towns being allured by the better living condition and favour of the State," added I.

"Yes, to some extent that may be true"—confessed she—"But now the State is giving necessary

attention towards the peasants."

Probably that was true.

My guide asked on our way back to hotel whether I would like to see the "Comrades' Court."

"What's that?" asked I.

"In factories or in all collective institutions they hold Court amongst themselves to judge any fault of the Comrades (co-workers)."—

—"I think it is something like arbitration board; but what measures do they take if anybody refuses to obey their decisions?" questioned I.

—"Oh they can't disobey. They know that the united strength of the Unit is behind it."

—"Do you mean your party-meetings of which I have read so much in foreign books?"—

—No, that's different. In 'Comrades' Courts' only the members of one particular unit, are tried but in the party-meetings all the members of the party join to discuss important things or to judge any fault of the party-members. There any body be he or she a communist or not is allowed to file any substantial complaint against any partyman and the members are expected to confess their fault without keeping anything secret. That is a check for the partymen"—explained she.

—"I think it is something like Christian theory of confession in the Church."

—" No, certainly not, they confess before the father and that is enough to get mercy of their God but in our case it is not so. You are expected to confess everything, if you conceal anything anybody can reveal it but even if you confess without concealing anything you cannot always expect pardon from the party. You may be expelled from the party or suspended for a definite period. This confession is before men with brains and common sense, not before the deaf and dumb God or the hypocrites and parasites, the clergy," strongly resented she.

With a break I said, " But I would like to see something else—a more important institution than your Comrades' Courts."

" Well we can go to the Night Sanatorium to-night."

—" That's a better idea "—said I and it was arranged that we should go there in the evening.

After my lunch I took rest. From my window the Mascava river and the Red Square with the fantastic St. Basil Church could be seen. The general poor-looking appearance of the city was whispering to me that it will take years of efforts for this city to equal Berlin, Paris or even Calcutta. There was no rush, no heavy traffic in the cobbled streets, the horsedrawn carriages and the trams looked shabby, the people were evidently poor and dirty. But still the poor or the

proletariat are by far more privileged here than in any other country of the world. True it is and they admit it that their standard of living is still low and they sincerely hope that the second Five-Year Plan will improve it; but the workers there are now living a much better life than they used to do. Instead of their vermin-infested tottering huts they have got now nice clean modern buildings to live in, they have got the creches and kindergarten schools to bring up and educate their children; now they have got the right to hold any of the Government offices, they have got hospitals, libraries, clubs free; starvation no more stares them in the face, they know they must get the rationed food at a cheaper price; they have got their voice over the management of the factory where they toil; they may be less skilled than the engineer or the manager but they are by no means inferior to them—they can go and see them whenever they like, they can criticise the work of the higher officers not with a suppressed disgusted tone but publicly and vehemently in the meetings, in the "Wall Papers" of the factories and before the R. K. I. (Peoples' Commissariate for Workers' and Peasants' Inspection), a formidable body in the USSR., which has the supreme power to inspect the working of all the factories. The trade unions, of which all the workers must be members, now are not bodies to

fight with the employers, but to safeguard the interest of the labourers and help the employing bodies. There is none to impair the interest of the workers—so none to fight. There are trade unions for different major industries and the workers should be members of their respective unions. The employer-bodies make all the contracts with the trade unions. If any worker does not get any redress from the management against any of his grievances he can approach the "Fabkom" or "Zavcom" (Factory committee) which has behind it the collective force of all the workers and is a powerful unit indeed in Russia.

The working conditions of the factories have greatly been improved. In all the factories there are hospitals, as well as creches for the children under four years of age of the working mothers. Some factories have provisions for education where an ordinary labourer can study to be a technician, engineer, advocate, chemist or teacher. Russia has abolished a seven-day week system. All the workers, either in factory, school or office, work for five days and the sixth day is the day of rest. All the institutions or workers have not the same day for their rest, which I think should be a great botheration, at any rate for the newly-married or unmarried passionate lovers. When the husband gets the day of rest, the wife may be working hard in the factory or even sometimes the husband

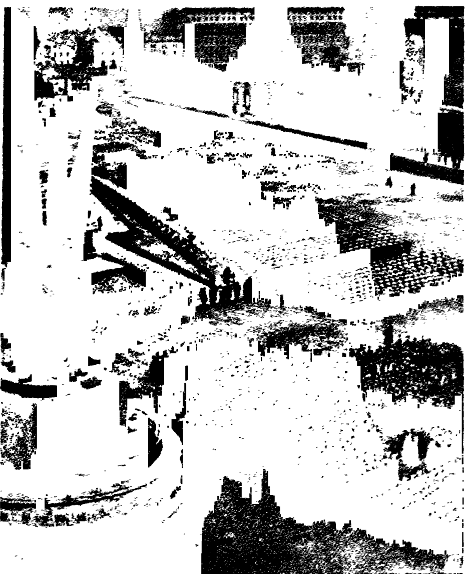
members of different ages. The youngest generations are called 'October Children.' You know the revolution was in October; the middle-aged youths are Pioneers, youths up to twenty-four are members of the young communist league generally known as Komsomol. Members of this society are admitted into the Communist Party when they can prove themselves fit to be communists by doing remarkable social works. Communists must sacrifice their individual comforts to the will of the Party. That's a difficult task."

"Are you a communist?" asked I.

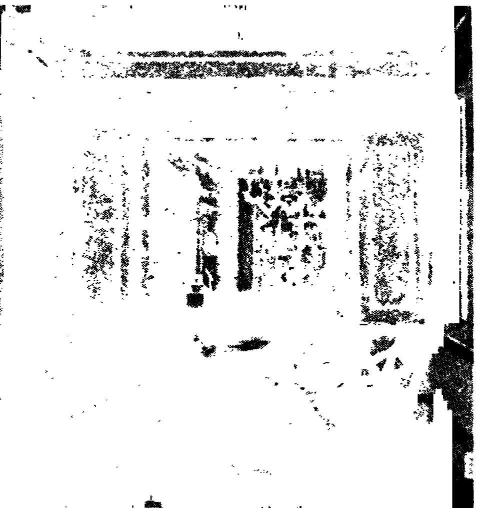
"Sure, a young communist," exclaimed she. Her eyes sparkled with pride.

"What are the Shock Brigaders" added I.

"A definite plan is given to a group of the party-members and when they can fulfil the plan they are honoured as Shock Brigaders or they are given a Victory Banner," explained she.



Celebration of the 15th year of the Revolution on the 7th Nov., 1932 Red Square, Moscow



The Primrose drawing-room at Summer Palace

XIV

From the tram road we crossed some poorly-lighted lanes and by-lanes and reached the Night-Sanatorium within a few minutes. The first room we entered was the dining hall. All the rooms had central heating. The guide sent for the in-charge of the place who soon turned up and took us around. On her way upstairs the in-charge knocked and opened some door on her right side probably to show us the room but as soon as she opened the door a shrill shriek of woman-voice was heard. The in-charge at once closed the door and murmured. We proceeded upstairs. On the first floor, we were first taken to a small room, just on the right hand side from the landing space. In this room every day the inhabitants of this sanatorium are examined. I was shown regular records of their temperature, weight and pulse. The in-charge herself keeps all these records. Next we went to the drawing-room, having radio set and newspapers. It was about 8 P.M. so there was none in the drawing-room—all the members were in bed. The in-charge knocked at the doors of the bed-rooms and opened them. Male and female patients were in different rooms; all were comfortably sleeping in nice clean beds. In one room there were some children with an attending nurse. As the patients were in bed,

I did not dare vex them by asking any question. We were again taken downstairs. We entered a small room, where the patients leave their dirty factory clothings. This was evidently the front side of the building. So we must have entered by the back door, which led us to the dining hall. Adjacent to this room was a big bathing hall, with hot and cold water running. So far I can remember there was a partition in the hall for the other sex. Probably on her way upstairs the in-charge opened the other door of this hall, when there might be some women bathing, who might have shrieked.

The labourers leaving their dirty clothings have their bath in this hall and then wear the sanatorium-clothings. Taking rest for a while in the drawing room, which time they may utilise by reading papers, listening to radio or discussing some plans, they take their supper at half-past seven in the evening. They pass the whole night in the Sanatorium and early in the morning leave it for the factory. They have their midday meal in the factory and do not come back to the Sanatorium until evening. The school-children too stay here in the same way; only they are served their supper at half past six instead of half past seven.

I should make it clear that these Sanatoria are not anything like hospitals: only those who are in-

disposed or liable to be attacked with any disease or of weak constitution and need better food and living to improve their health, are admitted in these Sanatoria, on production of a certificate from the factory-doctor. I was given to understand that these certificates are quite liberally granted. Similarly the school-children have to secure certificate from their school-doctor. In this Sanatorium an ordinary three-course supper is served but that is surely a better food for the poor labourers. The living condition is up to the standard—all rooms and beds were spotlessly neat and clean. The Sanatoria are free, all the expenses are borne by the Social Insurance Department. The medical officers are provided by the Ministry of Health but paid by the above named department. As the Russian workers work in shifts for twentyfour hours—different batches of workers come here at different times. I was told there are six Sanatoria in the Moscow district and probably this was the leading one.

XV

In the morning we took a tram to see a Community House. There I expected to see the daily life of the Communist Russians—how they live, eat, are taught and amused. The temperature was this day 9 deg. C below zero but Russians were not satisfied with this cold—they were saying, " We get this temperature in November; generally we have 30 deg. C below zero now (January). Probably America has got a colder winter this year, so our winter is less severe." Unlike other countries of Central and Northern Europe, in Russia the bright warm sun can be seen in winter.

The Community House was nearby the tram line. Children were ski-ing and skating on the yard. It seemed in summer the yard of the building is transformed into a nice garden. It was a massive building with two projecting wings. The whole building was divided into several apartments, each apartment having two rooms. Those are rented to the labourers on a monthly rent of 40 roubles. The rooms were quite clean and fairly furnished. The Community House has a common dining hall and laundry but the members of the Commune may, if they like, have their food cooked for themselves. There was a creche attached for the children up to 2½ years. This creche was almost on the same lines as that of Lenin-

grad, only it was a smaller one, and had less arrangements for play and music. We enjoyed a scene there—the feeding of the young babies. The babies were gravely sitting around the nurses, each expecting its turn with eager look and open mouth. The beds, dresses and kerchiefs were clean. In the other wing was a kindergarten and junior school for children from 2½ years to six. If my memory does not betray, there were three classes with three groups of students according to their age. One class struck me very much—it was of the youngest folk. The lady-teacher was sitting in the middle and the pretty young babies sat around her, one clung to her neck, one hung on her back, the other took her face with soft tiny hands and all were asking something. I was told the teacher was telling them stories—the first step to teaching. She was telling about the miracles of the Five Year Plan, the oppressions of Tsardom, the dream of the future and those young hopes of Russia were listening to it with eager attention, probably with the burning desire of realising the dream when they will be the Standard-bearers. I was told there was a club and theatre attached to this House. Nearby this House there stood a high school so that the sons and daughters of the members of the Community House can attend to it after finishing their study in the junior schools. The idea of the present community in

Russia seemed to me very much similar to that of our village life. What we are managing to destroy in our system of living, Russia is trying hard to create. The ideal of our village life was co-operation and fellow-feeling amongst the villagers—they all arranged and enjoyed co-operatively "Chabbish Prahar," "Jatra," "Kirtan" and other amenities; in each village there were common blacksmith, washerman, barber and the village commune had the supreme authority over them—it could direct these common servants not to attend to some particular individual, if he did anything against the interest of the society. Even the specialisation, of which Russia now boasts so much and is trying her utmost to introduce in every branch of production, be it agricultural or industrial, existed in our village life. Not only the barber, washerman, goldsmith were specialists in their own lines, but also the cultivators, potters, carpenters, priests were specialists in their respective lines, as the idea of caste distinction was nothing but this specialisation, as is clear in our 'Gita.' (चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः). But now flushed with the Western ideas and faced with the capitalist competition, we have broken the ancient order of life; we had to do it to live but probably that move was in the wrong direction. Russia has realised this blunder of the West and is now building her society probably almost

on the same line of ancient Hindu ideology. Its Commune Houses can easily be compared with our villages. In our villages, even now all the villagers, be they landlords and tenants, employers and employees, money-lenders and borrowers, whatever difference there may be in their economic status, sit together side by side in social feasts, and have their food from the same kind of plate; all of them have equal voice in "baro-ari" functions and this is the case in Community Houses too. It does not matter, what a worker earns, he or his children will have the same food from common dining hall, have the same care in creches, the same education in the schools as children of an Engineer will receive. The children are brought up with the community feeling—they are taught to think not of their individual interest but of the interest of the community.

XVI

We walked down to the high school. This was also a big building. Here we met another tourist party, most of them were Americans. First we went to a room where many boys and girls were singing in accompaniment to a piano. On the other corner some students were leaning on several tables and were learning the mechanism of radio sets. The high schools also work on shift system. The students are divided into two batches, each of which is taught in different shifts; when one is employed in practical training, the other is imparted theoretical lectures. Over and above this, the students are divided into several batches each of which has separate week days. One batch have their week, say from Saturday to Thursday, the other from Tuesday to Sunday. I have already mentioned that now Russia has a six-day week and there is no fixed day as general holiday. This has been done to run the factories and even the schools with the full load. In this one school, I was told, 3,000 students are taught and they are received in shifts of 1,500. To teach such a great number of students is possible only for this shift system and different week days.

The students, who have to wait for their shifts, flock together to this room, instead of wasting their



Modern Architecture in Leningrad

time in idle talks and utilise it by music or science, which they learn here under trained teachers with great pleasure. We requested them to sing some ancient folk song of Russia and one revolutionary song of the present day. The teacher in charge was kind enough to comply with our request. The old folk-songs sounded very akin to those of India. I am not a musician so I cannot say which Indian *rag* or *ragini* it resembled but to a novice's ear it sounded very much alike. The students, boys and girls, joined hands and danced a folk-dance with the song. The present day revolutionary song too seemed to be almost alike Bengali songs. Some of the words as "Chai," etc., sound and mean the same thing as in Bengal. The Russian churches look like Hindu temples or chariots (रथ and are unlike Western Gothic churches. The old Russia, in its religions, superstitions, Feudalism, and modes of living resembled very much those of present day Bengal. Russia is the wonderland where the east and west have met. Let me proceed. In another big hall students were having their drill and other physical feats. In this class there were about 50 students together, of which girls held the majority. I asked the teacher, "May I know the percentage of boys and girls in this school?"

"About 70 per cent. are girls and 30 per cent. boys."

" The girls seem to defeat the boys in their race for education "—said I.

" Yes, the girls are more intelligent and energetic. They can learn things earlier and easily."

" Then from this figure shall I think that your boys are not all having education or your women population is greater in percentage?"

" No, certainly not. So long the girls were kept out of the schools, so now they generally hold greater percentage and of course other schools do not hold the same percentage as it is here."

All the students seemed to be quite healthy and jolly. I could visualise side by side the sad figures of the students of my country.

We went from class to class; everywhere there was discipline and order. In one room there were various devices to encourage and punish the students. A big board was painted, one half red and the other half black. Names of the students, who are up to the standard are written on the red side and those falling short of it are placed on the black side. There were wall and hand-written newspapers, in which news of the villages, collected by the students, current topics, literary articles and report of the progress done by each class according to the Five Year Plan and criticisms of individual students if they fail to prepare their lessons or do anything against socialistic

ideas, appear regularly. These are the only whips with which the Russian students are punished—no cane or corporal punishment is inflicted. The students hold friendly courts to try those who do any wrong. There were models and live plants for study of botany and allied subjects. Every student has to learn one foreign language, be it English, German or French, and even the young students of 13 or 14 years of age have to study Chemistry, Physics, Botany, etc.

On the ground floor there were machine rooms, where students were studying and handling machines themselves producing some common articles. In this school-factory students work for two hours and are sent to big workshops four hours a week. In this room we were given manuscripts of some monthly magazines, published by the students and were shown the daily diary books of each student. Every student has to keep his diary. The Five-Year Plan wanted a general improvement in various departments. The plans for particular things were sent to the respective departments from where plans for the smaller units were prepared and sent to them. These smaller units prepared plans for different batches and the batches in turn planned for individual workers, thus every worker, every student, artist, engineer or peasant has to do his part to fulfil the whole Plan; so every one keeps his diary to record how and to what extent he

has done the duty planned to be done by him. There are Shock Brigadiers in schools, factories, collectives and every sphere of work. In the office-room—not in the common-room—I was surprised to see some boys and girls paste photographs of Lenin, Stalin and some great leaders on their wall-paper, cutting them from "Izbesta," "Bavda" and some other papers and the teachers helping them like friends. The teachers did not seem to have any false sense of prestige, which could bar them from being friends with the students. A time there was when teachers had to obey and fear the students of Bolshevik Russia. It was the students who arranged the curriculum, considered the methods of teaching and dismissed and appointed the teachers. It was a terrible time for the teachers. But now the teachers are in a far better position. They are now well paid, not frowned upon by the State as "intellectuals" and have their full control over the students. Lenin said, "The Public School Teacher must be placed on a height which he never has attained and which he never can attain in a bourgeois society." The authorities of present day Russia have now realised the value of the wise counsel of their prophet. A few years back children of the teachers were placed on the same status of those of Kulaks, or engineers, doctors, *i.e.*, intelligentsia and were allowed seats in schools and colleges only if there

was any vacancy after admitting the students from peasants and working classes. Now they are placed on the same status with the children of the labouring class. About 33 per cent. of the students come from the peasantry and about 50 per cent. from the workers. The sons and daughters of the Kulaks, the former nobilities and traders, cannot have their admission in schools and Universities easily unless they can prove themselves to be fit for the new society by doing hard labour for at least two years in any factory or farm.

The growth of education in Russia has progressed by gallops. Lenin declared, "Without literacy there can be no politics; there are only rumours, gossips, prejudices, fairy tales—anything but political class-consciousness"; so, to absorb the whole society in the new ideology of the socialistic State, the State has used its fullest force to teach the masses. For some years this teaching was very badly and wrongly done. But the Bolsheviks are always prepared to amend any of their blunders, if they realise it to be so. In August, 1932, the Central Committee of the Communist Party warned that the system of teaching had been wrong; literature, mathematics, history, geography, chemistry had been all neglected in the zeal of teaching politics. The students were just learning some political phrases, revolutionary slogans

and stories; songs and dramas were injected with utter hatred for everything of the old society.. Even the teaching of history was slighted by the Universities; but now they have realised their blunder and have changed the curriculum to make the students leaders of the future, and not worthless dreamers of idle ideology.

The numerical strength of the schools and colleges may well give the reader an idea of the galloping progress of education in Russia.

Number of students in different Educational Institutions.

	Elementary Schools.	Secondary Schools.	Universities	Agricultural Colleges.	Technical Schools
1914-15	7.000,000	500,009 (Approx)	125,000	1,600	267,000
1932.	19,000,000	1.550,000	500,000	207.800	850,000 and 1,100,1000 in factory schools.

The proportion of literate people in Russia was only 32 per cent. in 1920, while in 1932, it rose to 91 per cent. Now the boys and girls between eight and eleven are under compulsion to go to schools and in 1933-34 this school-going age will be increased to twelve. But in Moscow I was told children up to fifteen years of age must attend schools.

There is no State-language to be strictly taught in schools. Each part of Russia is at liberty to teach in the local language and as Russia is a vast

country, almost a continent—this free option has facilitated to a great extent the progress of literacy. Many of the tribes in Russia, e.g., Gypsies and Buryats, had no script, no alphabet of their own but now they have got printed books, grammar and dictionary, even newspapers of their own. Now, I believe, Russian schools are being conducted in seventy languages. The meals in the schools are free for the children of less-paid workers and officials but only 12 to 25 copecks (100 copecks = 1 rouble) are charged per meal from others.

The full course in this high school is ten years but I was told soon it will be increased to 12 years, *i.e.*, students should be in the schools till they complete their 19th year instead of 17th. Older students work for six hours per day while younger folks have a four hour day. One of the co-visitors—an American—pointing to the cracked walls and damaged floors, said to me, "Look at these. This is a new building, only built 5 or 6 years ago but see the poor and hasty quality. They have wasted plenty of money for their ignorance and hot haste." Really that building appeared to be at least 50 years old though I was told by the guide it was newly built for the school.

XVII

After our lunch we went to the Intourist Office attached to my hotel for my passport. My guide went in search of the above, while I was just casting leisurely looks on the posters of the wall.

" Hallo! How are you? "—a clear warm voice. My eyes followed the voice; it came from the rosy lips of a charming girl. Forgetful and foolish I am! That I could not recognise her she could understand from my strange looks and said, " Can't you recognise me? Oh! no—you should not be like that. I have recognised you at a glance, you are Mr. Baneryee. Aren't you?"

Yes, it was I, but who was she? Oh....her face seemed known but....where had I seen her.... where?

With her sparkling eyes, and dreamy voice she said, " I took you from the station that day. You have forgotten that so soon! You shouldn't do it, Should you? "

Oh, yes....! now I could recognise her. I was ashamed of my forgetfulness and asked pardon.

She enquired, " What for are you waiting here? "

" The guide has gone to bring my passport."

" Are you going to-day?" asked she.

" Probably tomorrow "—answered I.



Children at their breakfast in the Community-House Creche



A Russian Propaganda Picture

"Well I am finding her out for you"—she went away like a streak of lightning.

Russians seemed to me very beautiful. How nice is their cut of the face, grace and how free, frank, inartificial and simple they are! I think if the Russian women could get the toilets and dresses of Paris or Berlin, they would be the most beautiful in Europe.

We went to the "Torgsin" in Petrovka Street, the market for the foreigners, to buy some souvenir of Russia.

It was not far from the hotel—we walked. On the way some soldiers passed by—with long grey coats. The guide pointed out, "They are the members of the Red Army."

"But they are Grey"—said I.

"Yes, they were the Reds during the revolution but now they are as you see them—."

"They seem to be most favoured by the State. They are sufficiently clothed and seem to be happy and well-fed from their faces"—said I.

"Yes, they are. Their long coats could well dress two workers but they should be kept comfortable, because on them rests the safety of the State"—explained she.

The Torgsin was a big store having food and provisions, clothing and shoes, furniture and utensils, books and photographs—all that is needed for livelihood.

The store was neat and clean and well displayed; the attendants were always alert and obliging; it can easily be compared with any of the well-managed stores of Europe. Here the prices were much less for the foreigners and foreign moneys, be it pound or dollar, were accepted. The apple for which I had to pay ten shillings in the hotel, could be had here for 3 to 4 pence. But things of luxury are very costly. They charged £2 for one wooden ordinary cigarette case, 10 shillings for Mr. Murice Hidus' "Humanity uprooted" and two to three pounds for one kerchief. Still it is cheaper to shop here for those who have "valuta" or foreign moneys. Here I saw many Russians, too, to shop and on enquiry I came to know that they were buying goods for their friends and relatives who were in foreign lands. The cash-memo of the "Torgsin" is to be shown in the frontier when one leaves Russia, otherwise goods bought will be detained. The accountants, who were realising the price by calculating exchange rates, seemed to be incompetent. They took an unnecessarily long time to calculate and the calculations differed from one hand to the other. Some calculated at the rate of 3.5 roubles to the pound, some 7 or 6.5 to £1. In Leningrad there was a small store in our hotel, which was mainly for the foreign visitors, but I was not told of any Torgsin of this kind.

For the Russians, themselves, it does not pay to shop in Torgsins with their roubles. They have the co-operative stores. Three hundred or more members can form a co-operative store. The "Centrosoyus" or the central co-operative store manufactures on a large scale all the necessary goods of the members and distributes them through district bodies. These bodies also run kitchen and bakery for the workers and officials, who are not served with food by their employer-body. The co-operatives now hold 65 per cent. of the retail trade of the country—and 30 per cent. is supplied by other State Agencies, the rest 5 per cent. of the trade is held by private traders.

We walked down the Sverdlov Square, formerly Theatre Square, on one side of which stands majestically the Grand Theatre and another small theatre building. In an office on this square my guide bought railway tickets for me and reserved berths. This too took a pretty long time which speaks of the inefficiency of the Russian skilled labourer. Next we again walked down to the "Obelisk of Freedom" and Lenin Institute. The Obelisk has been erected to commemorate the victory of the revolution of 1917. Lenin Institute is a big library with huge collections. This building is one of the finest made by the destructive Bolsheviks. We passed the museum of the revolution and historical museum but for want of time could not see them

thoroughly.

I came to know from the State guide-book to USSR. that there had been an institution named VOKS, the society " for cultural relations with foreign countries." It does not deal with politics. It is this institution that invited our poet Tagore to Russia. The VOKS invite foreign writers, poets, philosophers, actors, dancers, artists and great men of all the countries on all cultural subjects to enrich their own through their contact and advice. Their address is 17, Trubnikovski Pereulok, Moscow 69. I went with my guide and found out this institution. The guide informed them that I would like to talk with some English knowing man who could give me all necessary informations on the culture and constitution of Russia. I had to wait for a few minutes when an aged man came forward and said in English with Russian tone, " Good afternoon."

As I was from India, the in-charge of the Eastern Branch of the society was deputed to attend me. But unfortunately he was a poor speaker in English—so here, too, I had to take much help from the guide. From this society, one English monthly *Soviet Culture Review*, and a bi-monthly journal *Socialist Construction in the* USSR. are published in English, French and German to give the public of the world correct informations of what is happening in Russia and how they are progressing. I was very kindly

given several copies of the journals.

I said: "I have seen much of your progress in culture and industry, so I do not wish to bother you with those questions. The Russian constitution is still a mystery to me. From the reference books it seems that your Soviets are all in all but in none of the responsible posts of the Soviets I could see the name of Stalin though I have heard he is the dictator."

"Stalin is the General Secretary of the Communist Party"—interpreted the guide—"But he has no connection with the Union. The USSR. is divided into 42 autonomous Units of which 9 are Federal member States, 15 are autonomous Republics, and 18 are autonomous regions. The autonomous Units are independent so far as their internal affairs are concerned."

"What do you mean by internal affairs?"

"Internal laws, public health, education, culture, industry, etc. But they must act in consultation with the Union in matters of financial, economic and labour questions. The affairs affecting the international questions and relations are solely dealt with by the Central Executive Committee of the Union."

"You mean army, defence and foreign relations?" enquired I.

"Yes, as well as transport, foreign trade, Civil and Criminal legislation, economic planning—all these

are dealt with by the Central body," added she.

"Well then, how do you claim that all the Federal States are autonomous? Practically, they are all held under subjugation."

"How?"—asked she in surprise.

"The same status the British Government is ready to give India. They are ready to place everything in the hands of the Indians save finance, foreign affairs, and army and navy, *i.e.*, the main key to independence. But we are not in a position to accept that. Suppose India joins you, but for what benefit? To enjoy the same right which they are going to have from the British Government?"

"But the constituent states have every right to withdraw themselves from the Union, if they so like"—added she.

"That may be on paper, but I don't believe that you will allow any republic to sever the connection so easily. So you know how Soviets were established in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, though they declared themselves independent republics?"

"But probably you know that we have not interfered with Poland, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia when they wanted to establish Republican Governments"—murmured she.

"That's not for your generosity, that was because of your inability"—exclaimed I. The guide

held her arms up, as if in surrender. This humourous attitude of hers made all laugh. I came to my senses; I was in Russia. I should be careful of speaking so vehemently against the USSR.; who knows what calamity may befall me?

"Well, what is the constitution of the governing bodies?"—enquired I.

"The Union of Central Executive Committee is divided into two chambers. 'The Soviet of the Unions' is represented by about 400 representatives, who are elected according to the population of each Union and in the 'Soviet of Nationalities' an equal number of members is elected from all the nations; thus every nation and all the Unions are fully represented in the Central body."

"How many members are there in the Soviet of Nationalities?" asked I.

"About 130. You know, the constituent States are not only constitutionally independent, but they are culturally and economically independent. There are about 185 racial and 147 linguistic and several religious groups. Formerly Russian was the official language and Lithuanian, Ukranian and other languages were forbidden as State languages. But now every nation, every tribe can use its own language in its administration and education. Moreover, Economic Exploition of one part of the country for the

benefit of another has been stopped. Each republic gets full benefit from its national wealth."

The constitution was clear but the thought of the Communist Party was hovering over me. I was not satisfied with the reply regarding it. So I again asked, " Who is Stalin? What connection has he with the Central Executive? "

" He has no connection with it."

" Then, why is he called the dictator? "

" Because he is the dictator," said she smilingly.

" Then what's the use of all this show, of Soviets and representatives? If the man who is neither elected by the people, nor has any connexion with the constitution, dictates to you and controls everything, then what is the good of so many Soviets and Chambers? ", said I.

Consulting, as she was doing, with the in-charge, the guide said, " He has got no power over the State. He just leads his party, but it is the President of the Central Executive who leads the country."

But this was apparently a false statement. On our way back I again asked my guide, " Do you personally believe that Stalin has no voice in the State affairs?"

" No "—murmured she; " He is all in all."

" Not only he, but I think the Communist Party is all in all in Russia "— said I.

"Yes; but why should they not be? It is they who brought about the Revolution, who acquired independence. So it is quite natural that they should dominate now."

"I think all the responsible officers are communists."

"Not all, but the greater percentage—and the percentage is steadily increasing. The party is the supreme power. From the Kremlin it controls all the affairs. Your terrible G. P. U., the Red Army, are under its command. It is the party or 'Politbureau' who decides on policies, production, defence and everything."

This was true. The whole constitution is influenced by the party and practically the party rules. During our leisurely walk through the snow-clad streets of Moscow I was asking question after question and she was replying frankly and freely.

I asked her, "Well, I was seeing in your Budget for 1932 that the State took loan for about three thousand million roubles. Who gives this loan and all what interest? I think the public subscribed it."

"Yes, the State raises loan from the public and pay interest on it. Well, why are you smiling; you think the State is creating again another bourgeois class? No, certainly not: they have to pay heavy income-tax and also inheritance tax."

" Still people can earn something now from their idle money and without any labour. Like furniture, clothing, utensils, these bonds are private properties and they are means of production; that's enough proof of your failure to abolish totally private means of production, which is the main theme of your Socialist ideology," said I.

" But the State must have funds to carry on its huge undertakings and you know how the policy of the State has been changed regarding private trading. But the State does not take large amounts of loan from one individuals, so there is no chance of hoarding up,"* explained she.

" Which body floats the loans? Is it the Central Executive? " asked I.

" No, the Central Executive is only the executive body. Probably the Gosbank issues them as it is the central bank of USSR.," explained she.

" I think through this bank of yours all the banking business of the country is transacted."

" You mean whether individuals keep their accounts with it or not? " asked she.

" Yes, as well as big concerns, e.g., factories Sovhozes, etc."

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* " The number of subscribers to the fourth loan was given me as 40 millions and the amount raised 3,000 million roubles."—F. W. Pethick-Lawrence's " Finance."

"We keep our accounts in Co-operative banks and Savings banks (60,000 branches in all); but factories, transport departments, workshops, etc., take loan from "Gosbank" or "Promebank" and keep their accounts there."

"What is the Prombank?" asked I.

"This bank finances to start some new concerns and always on long terms but without any interest while "Gosbank" advances money to these concerns on short term and charging an interest generally at 5 to 7 per cent."

"Then what return does the "Prombank" get for its blocked capital?"

"Oh, that bank is to invest money for starting new enterprises but it charges a turnover tax of 22 per cent. of all the concerns though theoretically it can claim all the turnover and 100 per cent. of all the transport trusts. The "Gosbank" is to finance for developments and meet intermediate needs as well as it controls trade—foreign and internal, all the industries, agricultural and forest produce, issue of notes, and communications."

"You are speaking of turnover profits and interests: but how can your factories have any profit? I am under the impression that your factories sell goods only at the cost price. For whose benefit do they earn profit?" enquired I.

" No, you are under a wrong impression," smiled she; " all the concerns—railway, electric supply, engine and tractor factories, light industries—all are run under seperate trusts and each trust has to show its profit and loss. All trusts sell their goods imposing a certain percentage of profit on the cost of production. All the trusts—be it a productive concern or consuming one—are all independent of one another and are related just as a producer and a consumer of a capitalist country."

This statement was not quite clear and to make it clearer to me I asked, " Well, I have heard about your central planning but how is it possible if different trusts control the trade independently? "

" But the trusts are controlled by the Gosbank—the central body. The rates for raw materials and finished products are dictated from the Gosbank and if any trust, be it a producing or a consuming one—has any objection to the price being fixed—it will have to refer to the Gosbank to consider and not to the trust concerned. As regards the central planning of production, the Gosplan plans the production for next " Pyatiletka " (five year) and circulates it to the director of respective trusts or companies, who in turn send it to the individual factories where it is discussed and amended by the workers and again sent back through the channels through which it passed, with the

necessary amendments. The Gosplan then considers it and declares finally what is to be done. This is central planning—you understand? " interrogated she.

" Yes,—this is as far as production is concerned but if the consumption is also not controlled by the same body again there will be the same nasty question of over-production and trade depression."

" You are right. But the consumption is also controlled by the Gosplan. The machineries, minerals and raw materials are all consumed by the State factories. So it is quite easy to control production in proportion to the consumption."

" Now you have allowed free individual trade and the farmers now have to give only a grain-tax to the State and can sell their surplus produce in the open market at any rate; don't you think that this may affect the production estimated by the State? " asked I.

" Though the farmers can sell their produce by law, in the market, yet they are so heavily taxed, if they sell it there, that generally they prefer to sell it to the State concerns. Private traders, even cabmen, are denied ration-cards and as regards other individual trades—nothing productive is left to the individual trader's hand except small home industries."

XVIII

In a char-a-banc I and several other tourists went to see the 'Correction House,' as the Jail is termed there. We had to wait in front of the jail-gate, made of iron bars, while the guide went in, probably to approach the authorities. We were trampling down the snow and exchanging each other's views about this mysterious land. Some exclaimed, "Oh! what a terror we had of the horrible Reds."

"But they are just like any other civilised nation"—remarked another.

"We were led to know by the foreign presses that the Russians have destroyed every thing old and ruined all the precious arts of the pre-revolution days and there are so many orphans who can not claim anybody as their parents"—added a lady.

"They are first class liars you know. In the last war the false propaganda was one of the weapons which was as dangerous and useful as poison gas or submarines"—said an old American.

The jingling of the unlocked chain was heard at the gate. It was open and we entered one by one, being counted in a waiting hall where we had to put down our names and addresses, probably in a visitors' book. Then we had to cross an open yard and come to another waiting hall, where there was a tea-stall

and refreshment room. The prisoners can buy whatever they like in this stall. We had to wait for about fifteen minutes here and then were taken into the interior of the jail.

First we were taken to the first floor before a theatrical stage. It was a fairly big stage with covered auditorium, where there were several chairs. All around the walls there were mottos of the Five-Year Plan, e.g., "We must fulfil our plan," "Fulfil the plan and help the nation," etc., written on red calico with white letters. These mottos were to make the prisoners conscious about their civic duties. Here the prisoners occasionally stage some plays or have cinema shows. This was astonishing to me—a stage for the prisoners! Our guides explained to us the difference between the administration of the new and old prison houses. The old jails were kept to punish with the idea of retaliation; but the new jails are to correct the misguided members of the society and to give them opportunities to fit themselves to the new society. They do not use the word "turma" any more, which means jail and they have named it "ispravdom," meaning house of correction. Next we were taken to the common-room and the library. The two librarians were prisoners with one officer-in-charge at the head. The readers too were the convicts. Beside the library were class

rooms for the inhabitants of this blessed place. In the class rooms and in the library room were some almirahs having samples of faulty and well-made yarns and cloths spun in the jail factory and specimens of other crafts done by the prisoners; in separate charts the faults were described, to warn others not to repeat them again. In a corner of this library there hung a plan of some new improved machinery which had been planned by one of the intelligent prisoners—that was there for the perusal of others, who might discuss about it. After the hour of work, inmates of this institution are taught in regular classes—so that when they will be released, they may be good citizens and may be skilled labourers. During their leisure period they read books from the library.

We went to the dormitories where the prisoners live. They were nothing like cells—big spacious halls with several iron spring beds with quite clean bedsheets and pillows. In every room there was a radio loudspeaker. In Russia there are about 61 broadcasting main stations and about 4,000 sub-stations. These sub-stations work on very low voltage and are connected with 70 to 100 loudspeakers. Big factories, correction houses, or such big institutions as can justify a sub-station of its own, can have it. These stations allot the major portion of their programme to the relaying of the main station pro-



Students in the Library



Students in the Laboratory

gramme and broadcast lectures, suggestions, complaints, gramophone records from their own studio. So far as I can remember now, I saw such a sub-station in this prison or it may be in the high school. The main stations generally allot about 60 per cent. of their programme to music, drama, literature, *i.e.*, art, 20 per cent. to politics, 10 per cent. to Government news bulletin and 10 per cent. to technical propaganda.

We saw some of the prisoners in this dormitory with quite clean dresses, reading newspaper or chatting idly, quite at home, and one playing on a violin. Some were taking tea; I enquired if the tea is served from the State at that time of the day. The guide replied, "No, they buy it from the jail-stall."

"Where do they get money to buy it?"

"Oh, they get their wages—half of which is kept by the jail authority, which is handed over to the prisoners at the time of their release and the other half is given to them regularly, with which they may buy food or clothing or have a shave or shampoo."

"Do they get the same wages as outside the jail?"—enquired I.

"No, certainly not. They only get 20 roubles per month, not an enviable sum indeed."

In each room there were 10 to 12 prisoners.

Nowhere did we notice any strict rule or rigour; the prisoners were quite at home. I asked one of

them, "Are you quite at home here? Don't you feel uncomfortable?"

Some of the prisoners laughed hearing the question interpreted by the guide and they all shook their heads, "No, we are quite comfortable here. We live better here."

"So you would like to come here again after your release?" joked I.

"No," exclaimed some, "we love our homes, we would like to be there amongst our families. Our income is less here—moreover we are now defranchised—a terrible thing indeed."

Really this is terrible. In Russia one who is defranchised is looked down upon as a pariah—a pest of society;—alas! he has no voice in this State of the proletariate—even his sons and daughters are not allowed to play with other children in the public play-grounds.

We walked along the corridor and came downstairs where there was a queue before the room. It was the barber's shop. About 30 men were waiting calmly expecting their turn. We stepped in. It was a nice barber's shop with several mirrors on the wall and full accessories necessary. The air of the room was smelling shampoo. In 3 or 4 chairs several were either shaving or having their hair cut. At another table some were deeply absorbed in chess. As soon

as one finished another occupied his seat by turn.

"Do they pay for it?" enquired I again.

"Yes, from their wages. For a shave they are charged 20 copecks and thirty for shampoo with lavender, but they don't mind it. They are all expecting some of their relatives to see, to-day. You know they can't appear before their beloved with the clumsy face"—said the guide.

So!....the Reds are now becoming æsthetic!

"How often can they see their relatives?"

"Oh, it depends upon the conduct of the prisoners. Not to allow interview or write letters is the general disciplinary punishment. If they work well, they are allowed leave for 22 or more days—when they can go to see their relatives and friends or can work in some sovhozes, where they can earn more," explained she.

The papers say recently the USSR. has released 1,200 political prisoners for their good behaviour.

"Can they write or receive letters from outside as much as they like?" asked I.

"Oh! yes," added she—"As much as they like ....only if they have no bad report against them regarding discipline. Of course, there is the censor, but they never mind private talks."

"Can they have interview with out-siders as often

as they like? " enquired I.

" All depends on the conduct of the prisoner.... Not to speak of interviewing, in the criminal colonies, the prisoners can go to the neighbouring villages on the day of rest or even can have their fiances in the colony."

" What? ".... It was probably the eighth wonder to me. Criminals are let loose and they can make love in the jail! Very humane treatment indeed! They have not trampled down the human qualities in a man. We forget here that the criminals are men —they may have done something on the heat of the moment against the existing law but still they are men with flesh and blood; they have their sex hunger,.... it is a biological function, but we never care to think of all these and criminals are treated in both their jail life and after it like fierce beasts—which in turn make them such. That is why our jails never correct the guilty but make them cleverer and fiercer. I was told even the wives of married prisoners can come and stay with their husbands on their day of rest and they are allowed all necessary privacy.

I asked, " Do the jail authorities allow outsiders to come into the jail premises? It did not seem so easy at least in our case."

" Where do you get premises? The Criminal Colonies have no boundary walls—they are just settle-

ments for the criminals—something like a village."—Her statements were gradually surprising me more and more.

" Then what is this? " enquired I.

This is a correction house. Here only those who are charged with very serious kinds of offence or sentenced for the second time are detained; but generally the prisoners who commit offence for the first time or charged for fraud or embezzlement, etc., are sent to the colonies."

" But, don't they fly from the unwalled colonies? "

" No, they can't. Where shall they fly? How would they live? They are allowed to be outside the colonies till ten o'clock in the evening, of course, on the day of rest."

" Then what is the difference between jail life and that of the citizens? " asked I.

" Indeed, the idea that you are in a colony or a correction house is painful....you are defranchised —one of the greatest curses in Russia," said she.

Some prisoners were cutting wood logs outside in the open court-yard amidst the snow.

We passed down to a textile factory. In this factory thread was being spun and woven. Here many women too came to our sight. In this factory prisoners are taught the industry and are specialised.

I asked my guide, "Do the women live together with the male prisoners?"

"No. But if they like they can make love and marry each other and stay in the correction house as husband and wife." This was still more interesting.

"But there is no creche in this jail, where can the women keep their children? Can't they have them there?" interrogated I.

"They can go to their children in the neighbouring villages to feed them if they like, and the colonies have creches."

"How long have the prisoners to work here?"

"Eight hours a day."

"But I saw some sitting idle in the dormitories. Why don't they labour?"

"Oh, they will work in the next shift."

We went to the dining hall. It was neat and clean. Some were preparing meals for the evening. Everybody is encouraged to take to that line of work in which he feels interested or was accustomed to. The barbers in the barber-shop were all prisoners and to shave others was their duty there too. They get the usual 20 roubles per month and the charges taken from the prisoner customers are paid into the jail fund.

The whole constitution is practically run by the prisoners themselves. In their wall-paper they can criticise the jail authorities if they fall short of their

duty. The authorities only see that the complaints may not be, out of jealousy or baseless. Otherwise the prisoners have been given full freedom to have their say, to suggest any improvement or change, in paper, radio or meetings. They are always reminded that they should be good citizens and each of them should have his share in the great national plan. How naturally they are kept; nowhere is their self-respect humiliated, they are helped to self-assert, to know the three R's, to be acquainted with higher ideas and foreign countries through books, papers and radio, they are turned into good skilled labourers and on their release they are given an amount on which they can live at least some days until they find some job. After jail life its indignity carries no stigma in the future life of a convict. A prisoner can have any post in Russia as he or she deserves. Because he or she was in the prison there is no reason to refuse any job. Prisoners are taken to be misled, so when they have been led to the right path they must have all the facilities of life. Neither the State nor the society will frown on them.

One of the tourists exclaimed, "wonderful."

"It is" said I; "radio, refreshment stall, newspaper, barber's shop, a stage, above all love and marriage in a jail. It is more a home than a jail."

"It is not a jail, my dear friend," said my young

guide, " it is a *ispravdam,* a correction house. This is not meant to crush every thing humane in a prisoner, it is not to oppress them but to uplift them, to show a better path to the misled members of the society."

Yes, it was such. The state does not treat the prisoners with a spirit of retaliation but reconciliation.

XIX

My visit was at its end. I was to leave Moscow in the evening. But before dropping the curtain over this land of the Reds I should mention something about the second Five-Year Plan, which was a matter of much discussion at that time. During my stay the reports of the Departmental heads, as to their achievements during the last four years and three months for which time the first Five-Year Plan was worked, were published in the daily papers. I had the opportunity to read them in *Moscow Daily News,* an English daily, published in Moscow. Just to give the readers an idea of the work done during the first plan, and the magnitude of the work contemplated to be done during the second plan, I am quoting some figures here:—

Industry	Planned in the first plan	Actual output for the first plan	Figure for second plan to be completed in 1937
Tractor	91,000	105,850	—
Railway Cars	12,600	20,000 (1931 figure)	—
Locomotive Engines	825	812 (1931 figure)	—
Shoes	60.1 millions	76.8 (1931 figure)	—
Railway line to be electrified	—	—	12,000 miles
Electric current output	—	17,000 million K.W.H.	100,000 million K.W.H.
Current consumption per head		100 units	500 units

To give the readers an idea of the tempo of development, I am quoting the output per year just of one heavy industry—the automobile:—

Year.		Output.
1930	.. ..	8,500
1931	.. ..	24,400
1932	.. ..	56,000

They claim that "the object to attain which it took over two decades in America, will be achieved in our country in 6 years," and they have proved it by facts and figures.

By the end of the second plan USSR. should be nearly self-supporting as far as its machineries are concerned and now it will lay more stress on light industries, *i.e.*, those relating to the standard of living. So long Russia was in great need of heavy industries, as it had practically none of them and it needed them for its very existence, so they had no other alternative than to sacrifice individual comforts to the protection of the country. There will be no class distinction, which still exists there, by the second plan. They are determined to build a classless society by making everybody skilled and literate and thereby devaluating the present intellectuals whom they term as "skilled." But I doubt if this aim will be attained during next three more such plans.

Unluckily, all the papers and books brought from Russia have been destroyed. So now it is not possible for me to quote all the figures and speeches. The figures which I fortunately used in my articles pub-

lished previous to the loss of the references and those found in other authorities, have been quoted in this book. The figures of progress given herein will speak for themselves. I have tried my best to place before the readers my unbiassed experience of this mysterious land. I have tried to see to the best of my power both the bright and dark sides of the USSR. and have put them down for the readers who like to know something about this land of terror from an impartial pen.

I left Moscow by the evening train. On the train I was acquainted with a gentleman who introduced himself as an author. I asked how much did he get per book.

"Four hundred roubles per units of 40,000," said he.

"Do the authorities buy all your books?"

"Yes, they are in great need of them."

"Are you a playwriter or a novelist?"

"I am a school-book writer. This side has better prospects and pays better—moreover, you need not be anxious about the sale of your books. If the books are written according to the curriculum they will be taken by the Commissariat For Education," explained he.

"Are your playwrights and novelists well paid?"

"Oh yes, Maxim Gorky gets millions of roubles."

A girl with an uniform entered the compartment and asked something. I thought she was asking for the ticket so I produced it but she did not care to see it and went from one passenger to the other showing some tickets. The writer explained to me in broken English, "She is selling lottery tickets. The sale proceeds will be used for the Army and Navy."

"What are the prizes?"

He read them to me—one was travel round the world, another travel round Europe, another aeroplane flight over the USSR. or a motor car and so on; no cash prize was declared.

The writer asked me, during our conversation, which countries I had travelled in. Hearing from me that I had travelled throughout India and Europe he exclaimed, "How happy and fortunate you are!"

I murmured, "But this is nothing—the world is so great and I have seen so little of it."

"But still you have seen many countries but we are confined in this land. We won't be able to see the outside world," deplored he.

"Why not? With your own money can't you go outside Russia?"

"It is very difficult to obtain a passport to go outside."

The gentleman bought two tickets and presented

one to me. Each of the passengers of our compartment bought a ticket to help the State.

At Bigosovo, all the passengers had to present themselves with bags and baggages before the frontier Customs Office for inspection. It took about two hours. There was a radio loudspeaker in the waiting hall, which probably keeps the officers of this lonely place in touch with the heart of the country. There was no porter. So we had to carry our own baggages. All the suit-cases and letters and papers, though written in Bengali, were gravely inspected and read by the all-knowing officers. The train again started blowing off the snow on the line with steam blower. At Indra, next to Bigosovo, the authorities of Latvia again inspected the goods and asked if there was anything on which duty can be charged. After a run of three hours I had to change for another train at Dangavpils. When obtaining the visa the tourist has to mention by which frontier-station he would leave Russia. The whole day and night had to be passed in the train. The authorities of Latvia, on the exit frontier, and those of Lithuania and Poland did not allow a pleasant journey for the night, as we crossed those countries by night. Next morning at half-past nine the train entered the station of Berlin—the city known to me.

Adieu.